

The Fishnet

**Virginia Beach
Christian Church**
2225 Rose Hall Dr.
Virginia Beach, VA 23454

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Newsletter – jeri@vbcc.info
Office Hours
8:30 a.m. – 12:30 PM



January 2012

Contemporary Service
8:30 AM

Sunday School
9:45 AM All Ages
(Pre-K to Adults)

Traditional Service
11:00 AM

Childcare begins at 8:30 AM

I was having a conversation with a clergy colleague recently and we turned our attention to traditions of the church. How they functioned, if they functioned at all. What value they had. What value they did not have, yet were still often assigned. We carried on in this line of thought for a while, and I have been pondering this for a week now. So I thought, since it is the beginning of a New Year, instead of giving the same old thing about resolutions etc., I would give you my take on the subject of traditions; in general and specifically in the church. This is by no means a hard line in the sand that I am laying down. Certainly, I have some traditions that I hold to as well, but I think it is needed and healthy for us to examine this subject because, whether you know it or not, the topic comes up a lot in conversations around the church. Maybe not as directly as, “well, our traditions dictate that we do such and such...” but more often indirectly in the way we react to change, new ideas, or conversations about doing things differently. If we’re not careful, our past, our traditions can hold us back from what God may have in store for us, as individuals and as a congregation. As always, these are just my thoughts, and I welcome yours.

Traditions bring us joy. During the Christmas season, for example, I love the peacefulness of singing "Silent Night." I treasure the lights on the tree and the warm memories of Christmases past represented by the unique ornaments our family has collected over the years. I enjoy gifts under the tree and Christmas cookies and getting all the children together around the table. And my wife and I look forward to spotting some mistletoe to give us an excuse to kiss passionately and shock our children a bit. Traditions are comfortable because they are familiar --

comforting in the way that an old shoe is more comfortable than a new one. They fit us well and don't cause us discomfort.

Traditions are powerful, too. We humans are creatures of habit. Habits structure our days in productive patterns. Get up, comb your hair, eat breakfast, get going with the tasks of the day. And habits keep us from the futility of perpetually reinventing the wheel. Have you ever tried to teach a skill to a child or a new worker? It may take them a while to grasp it, but when they do, this learned skill, habit, or "tradition" of how to perform a task enables them to accomplish a lot more

RIGHT
HERE!
RIGHT
NOW!

Pastor: Rev. C. Jason Lewis ♦ **Contemporary Service Leader:** Robert Hughes
Director of Christian Education: Dr. Paul R. Parker ♦ **Pastor Emeritus:** Dr. William E. Austin
Choir Director: Maggie Austin ♦ **Organist:** Kimberly Golden ♦ **Administrative Secretary:** Susan Frey

than they could before. Much of the accumulated wisdom we humans possess consists of a statement of what works and what doesn't work, learned through painful trial and error.

Traditions function as a way of fixing patterns of behavior in order to preserve what is best. For organizations like churches and businesses, traditions are institutional memories or guideposts that keep us from straying from the values and productive patterns of the past. The people of Israel, for example, were commanded to commemorate Passover every year so they would remember how God delivered them from Egypt. Some churches recite the Apostles Creed or a Church Covenant. Businesses paper their halls with mottos and slogans that encapsulate the founder's unique insights on which the company was based. Traditions help preserve for us important truths and values.

But traditions can become hobbles, too. Traditions can become empty shells that are devoid of meaning and vitality. A tradition used to have value, perhaps, but not necessarily now. Once traditions were guideposts, now they may have become hobbles. If you've ever been a leader, you've faced the frustration of trying to lead people to do something new. It is said that the Seven Last Words of the Church are: "*We've never done it that way before.*" Corporations suffer from the "Not Invented Here" syndrome. They'll never consider this program, that option, or a kind of music or training that doesn't conform to their past. And many churches, or rather the people in them are no different. Tradition-bound churches, businesses, and organizations are so straight-jacketed by the past that they are unable to move into the future. In such a case, *past* traditions severely limit *present* possibilities. Organizations that cannot reinvent themselves to be relevant in present-day life are doomed. If they can't

respond to change, these organizations will die, not quickly, perhaps, but inevitably.

But it's not just churches that must be able to change. We, as individuals, must change, too. In this new year, *Culture* will change in response to current opinion makers, current events, fads, and fashions. *Circumstances* will force us to do things we've never done before. The continually shifting *Economy* will change the way we do ministry. *Physical changes* in our bodies will affect our desires, our abilities, and our lifestyles -- sometimes dramatically. *Relationships* will be severed or renewed as friends and relatives react to circumstances or move miles away.

If we remain tradition bound in our churches, this new year may be miserable. Many will interpret each change as a loss. We will either adapt or we will retreat further into our shells of traditions that no longer work in today's world. You see, traditions essentially focus on the past -- the values of the past, the methods of the past, the glories of the past. They help preserve value in a world that's constantly changing. But if we're tradition-bound, then we are unable to embrace the present or embrace change. Even worse, we are unable to fully embrace God when we are called to move, because moving sometimes does require change.

The Christian faith is not essentially about a building a denomination, or an institution stale with tradition. At its heart, Christianity is not a set of rules or a religious structure. The Christian faith is essentially about a "now" relationship with God. The essence of Christianity is not about the past, but about right now. How is God moving among our church *now*? Where is God calling us to *now*? What is God calling me to do as a part of this congregation *now*?

With all of the above being written, let me say that, of course, faith does have an

important component that *remembers* the past. We recall God's saving grace, for example. We remember what God has done for us in the past. But faith is only alive when it pushes us to continue to live out our faith in the present, in the now.

Sometimes I find myself interrupting my wife and starting to answer before she has finished speaking. Oh, that makes her mad! But when we are tradition-bound, we do that to God. We stop listening because we assume we already know what God will say and that God will never say anything new in the future. By our traditions we second-guess God about what is desired of us to do tomorrow, or about how we are called to react to a situation we're faced with today. Dear friends, this is not just wrong, it can be deadly!

The religious, tradition-bound Pharisees of Jesus' day resisted him more strongly than anyone else. And he didn't mince words when he confronted them: *"Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'* or from the Gospel of Mark, *"You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men...You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!"* (Mark 7:6-9) Wow! What would Jesus say to our church today? What would he say to you?

Now let's get personal. Is your own personal faith focused primarily on the past, on the traditions of your upbringing? Or is it focused on God in the present, right now? Are you listening so hard to your past that you can't hear God in the present? Are you hard of hearing -- spiritually? Our God longs to speak to us afresh today, right now. May we open our ears, and most importantly our

hearts, and hear what God is saying to us at the beginning of another year.

Keeping my ears open too,

Jason

**The 4 Principles
of the
Christian Church**
(Disciples of Christ)



- *Individual freedom to study and interpret Scripture*
- *Restoration of 1st Century Christian practices*
- *Unity of all believers*
- *Effective evangelism based on the first three principles*

Mark Your Calendar 

UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan. 1-2, 7pm-8am.....CYF Lock-In
Jan. 8-29, 5pm-7pm....Communication Skills Training
Mondays, 6:30pm.....Bible Study
Tuesdays, 6:30pm.....Study Group
Thursdays, 7:00pm.....Choir Practice
Food Pantry Hrs. . M. W. Th.- 10:00am-12:00pm
Tues. 11:00am-12:00pm, Fri. closed

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION Department

Dr. Paul Parker, Director of Christian
Education

The Word from Paul

(Not the Apostle)

Let me begin the New Year with a note of thanks. I am deeply grateful to each one of you for all the things you have done in 2011 to make Virginia Beach Christian Church the special place that it is. No one person can be the church. It takes all of us working together to accomplish the mission of the church. I am especially grateful for the glorious and powerful worship services during Advent that brought us together as a community of faith. I have heard great compliments about the choir cantata and other Advent music, about the youth and children's Christmas program, and about the Christmas Eve service. I was pleased that so many people could be a part of these events. I have sensed a new spirit of joy and enthusiasm in the past few weeks, and I hope that this new spirit will continue to fill the church in 2012.



Speaking of the New Year, I am excited about the possibilities that 2012 brings for the life and ministry of the church. Each New Year is a new beginning, a new opportunity to try a little harder, to sing a little louder, to pray a little longer, to study a little deeper, and to serve the Lord with a new commitment.

It is time to let go of the past, and to embrace the future, and so I proclaim the year of the Lord's favor for Virginia Beach Christian Church. Let us renew our

commitment to be the church, to proclaim the gospel, to serve our community, to reach out to the world, to comfort those who mourn, to feed the hungry, to cloth the naked, to stand for justice, to claim this land for Jesus Christ, and to seek the will of God for our church. (Isaiah 61)

In the words of Dr. B. David Napier, "The Land is come upon in doing the work, redemptive work, of him who is the Word, the unobtrusive Word, the quiet Word, sometimes, it seems, the silent, hidden Word. The land belongs to Christ, whose name is ours; whose greatness we appropriate in love; ...but by whose grace it can be given us to bless the families of the earth. Come Christ in us!" (Napier, B. Davie, *The Best of Davie Napier*, "Come Sweet Death", 1992)

Thanks Be To God:
Paul (Not the Apostle)

Children's Christmas Pageant **THANK YOU!**



Bravo! Well Done! Thank you to all the children and youth of Virginia Beach Christian Church who participated in the Children's Christmas Pageant

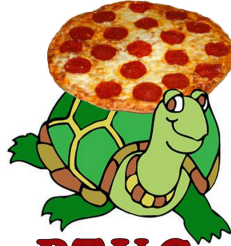
on December 18. You all were wonderful.

I also want to thank the adults who played parts in the performance, and all the adults and parents, who helped support, set up, prepare food, clean up, or helped make this production possible.

Youth Ministry at VBCC



(Christian Youth Fellowship)



P.T.U.C.
(Pizza Turtles United in Christ)

There will be a CYF (High School) Lock-In the evening of January 1, 2012 at the home of David and Pam McEwen. We will begin at 7:00 PM and end at 8:00 AM on Jan 2. Any youth who attends this event must be there the entire time, from beginning to end.

Regular youth groups will be held on Sunday Jan 8 and 22. We will meet in the evening from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Light Snack Supper at 5:00 PM. See you all there.

Jason 757-469-1776 or Paul 276-266-1017

Faith Leadership Institute a Training Opportunity for Leadership Development Communication Skills

During the month of January we will be offering a series of four workshops on **Communication Skills**. These workshops are designed to help any individual learn or enhance his or her ability to communication more effectively. The skills taught in these workshops can be used to improve the level of communication with your spouse, your teenager, your children, your work associates, or your boss. We will also focus on improving communication skills that can help each of us become better church leaders.

We, therefore, want to encourage elders, members of the deaconate, church leaders, committee chairs, parents, grandparents, or anyone else to join us on Sunday Evenings (Jan 8 - 29) from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM to learn how to communicate better.

We will begin with a light snack supper at 5:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall and we will begin our training over the meal.

CHURCH HAPPENINGS

MUSIC NOTES



December proved to be a busy month for the VBCC Adult Choir as they

presented their annual Christmas concert on December 5, offered special music for each Sunday in Advent, presented the anthem,



"Once Upon a Silent Night" at the Christmas Eve service, and gave a holiday music concert, including a carol sing-along, for the residents of the First Colonial Inn. The choir received a warm reception from the residents and has been invited to return for future music presentations. Undoubtedly,

our choir believes that it is important to "Make a Joyful Noise Unto the Lord."



Photos by Matt Hogendobler

Reminder to Church Key Holders

Please turn in your church keys if you no longer require their use because you are stepping down from a church position or for any other reason. Do not turn your keys over directly to your successor. You should turn them into the church secretary and they will be reissued to your successor. The church spent several hundred dollars to re-key locks last summer and we are trying to maintain control of persons holding church keys.



Thanks,
Jim Carbone



As many of you may recall, in the summer of 2010, Virginia Beach Christian Church chartered a Cub Scout Pack. In the almost year and a half they have had some ups and downs, as many new organizations do, but they are, once again, doing well and thriving. Our original charter was for 18 months, and Rev. Lewis just signed a re-charter agreement with the pack. With plans

for a new scout night coming up soon, the pack wants to keep the church up to date on where they are and what they are doing. With that, here is an update from the pack leader, Debbie Rife.

Since June, we now have 9 scouts and a prospect for an additional scout to join us next Thursday. We now have a Tiger Den (1st grade) of 2 with Krista Kalweit stepping up to become the Tiger Leader. We have 3 Wolfs (2nd grade) which I am leading at the moment, but one of the Wolf parents has agreed to step up and become the Wolf leader. We have 3 Bears (3rd grade) with Clarence Kalweit as their leader and 1 Webelos scout. We are in the process of trying to recruit a Cubmaster. The gentleman that I am talking to is stationed here with the British Navy. If he agrees, I think he will make an excellent addition to our Pack. After the 1st of the year we plan on having another new-member night to help the pack continue to grow. The boys are quite active. We had 5 of them attend the Veterans Day Parade in Virginia Beach. Last Thursday, 7 of the boys visited the Police Dept. on Independence Blvd. and seemed to really enjoy all the things that Sgt. Zelms showed them. We sold popcorn this year and have been able to put a small amount away to help buy awards for the boys as they earn them. Our next purchase will be a Pack flag and we are hoping to be able to get this by the new year. We would like to thank the congregation at Virginia Beach Christian Church for all their support this last year; we look forward to being with you for many more.



Installation Of Officers

The congregation **unanimously** approved the slate of officers for 2012 at its annual congregational

meeting in November. So, on Sunday, January 8, as in years past, we will have a service of installation for those officers. They will be formally installed through liturgy, but also, and most importantly, we, as congregation, will pray over all of those who will be serving. This is an important moment in the life of the congregation as we pledge our support, and prayer for those who have been chosen to lead our church in various capacities. Make plans to attend worship that day, as we will share this same installation liturgy in both services. Our prayer and support of our chosen leaders is vitally important, so come and lend your spirits as we lift our leaders in prayer.

2012 VBCC Board

Officers:

President: Bill Hayden
Vice President: Brenda Mallery
Treasurer: Jim Carbone
Secretary: Kaye Griffin
Financial Secretary: Kaye Griffin

Departments:

Administration: Mick Sumnick
Communications: David Dennis
Education: Open
Stewardship: Bill Hayden
Hospitality: Valerie Wertz & Robert Wertz
Membership: Matt Hogendobler
Outreach: Claire Carbone & Lisa Crawford
Property: Frank deForas
Evangelism: Jennifer Gaissert
Worship: Patti Watters



From the Treasurer:

The "Financial Picture for the Church's General Fund through 14 December 2011"

The Church's General Fund (GF) is the Fund that supports the everyday operating expenses (i.e. payroll, utilities, supplies and other department expenses etc) of the Church. The GF receives income from the Sunday services collections and other sources such as the Pre-School rental income and uses this income to pay for those expenses. The goal for the GF is to at least break even for the year. The official book balance in the GF was +\$15,315 for the year to date through 14 December 2011, which means that actual income exceeded actual expenses by that amount through that date.

Here is a comparison of actual income and actual expenses to their respective budgets through 14 December 2011, using the official book figures:

Income

Actual: \$221,885; **Budget:** \$205,142.

Expenses

Actual: \$206,570; **Budget:** \$221,222.

Note:

1. The budgeted figures above are computed based on the completion of 50 weeks in 2011.

Summary of the numbers: At this point, it looks very much like the General Fund will finish in the black for 2011. Congratulations to all who worked so hard to achieve this result. This includes all the Church members who diligently fulfilled their pledges during the year; the Church members who do not pledge but nevertheless made significant contributions during the year; and all the anonymous contributors of cash, whom we will never know but God knows them. And thanks to all the Department Managers who did an outstanding job at keeping their expenses within their budgets.

Happy New Year to all,

Jim Carbone

FEATURED FACES



*Jerry and
Kay Hase*

Jerry Hase has been enjoying his retirement since he left his position with the City of Chesapeake Public Utilities in 2005. Before moving to Virginia in 1985, he played music professionally in the Los Angeles area, and he continues to use his talents by playing lead guitar, pedal steel, mandolin, and dobro with four bands in this area. He and his wife, Kay, have a band, aptly named “The Long and Short of It”, since Jerry is 6 ft. 4 in. and Kay measures in at 5 ft. 2 in.!

Kay retired from Haygood United Methodist Church in 2006, after serving as the Director of Christian Education and Evangelism for 15 years. Throughout the years, she has been active in the church as a Sunday School teacher and choir member. She is now enjoying singing in the choir here at Virginia Beach Christian, working in the Food Bank, and participating in the Monday evening Bible Study. Jerry usually can be found in the sound booth each Sunday. He also participates in the life of the church by playing the guitar from time to time. They are pleased to be members of VBCC and have felt warmly welcomed since the first Sunday they attended.

DEPARTMENT NEWS

OUTREACH: Claire Carbone,
Lisa Crawford
Co-Chairpersons

Thank you to all who have donated food, meats, money, and time to the VBCC Food Pantry. In November, we helped 107 families, 504 individuals (an increase of more than 20%), and we gave out approximately 30 hams, turkeys, and/or chickens for Thanksgiving dinners. The numbers of hungry people keep increasing because of lack of jobs and rising costs. If we **can** help, we **must** help those who are less fortunate. In the New Year, I will continue to look for food, monetary donations and volunteers to help. Thanking you in advance for your generosity to others.



Please bring in to the church office any donations such as clothes, linens, 2012 (charity) calendars, hotel soaps, small unwanted gifts, Boxtops for Education, Farm Fresh receipts, Campbell soup UPCs, paper or plastic bags, or any other item you want me to find a home. Believe me, every little bit helps.

I received a Thank You from Princess Anne Plaza United Methodist Church for the kids clothes donated last month. I continue to take any clothing donated to their free Clothes Closet.

Claire