

# First Press

## First Reformed Presbyterian Church

— A congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America. —

12900 Frankstown Road • Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15235

### Training Ourselves for Godliness

I Timothy 4.7-10

“God is easy to please, but hard to satisfy” (George MacDonald, the Victorian-era Scottish writer). That is to say, a father is pleased with his baby’s first attempt to walk, but satisfied with nothing less than a firm, free, manly walk in his grown-up son (Lewis, 172). The same is true in the Christian life. Paul tells the Ephesian church’s pastor Timothy, “Train yourself for godliness” (1 Timothy 4.7). Paul is referring to spiritual discipline. That’s not an easy subject because we live in a culture—and a church culture—that is radically individualist and anti-nomian—a culture that basically says at nearly every turn, “Who the heck are you trying to tell me what to do. It’s none of your business!” Now, of course, we have a nicer way of saying that in the Church when anything is required of us. Instead of being so rude (honest?), we say instead—and we might even put it in the form of a question if we’re feeling especially sensitive—“But isn’t that legalism?” But we really mean the same thing—you don’t have a right to expect anything from me—I’ll do as I please. But here, Paul has great expectations of the Christian life and the work that is required to “train” ourselves in godliness. His expectations are a necessary corrective to the spirit that is so pervasive in today’s church.

Jesus had another way of expressing His expectations of His people: “You...must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5.48). Indeed, God is easy to please, but hard to satisfy! When Christ proclaimed perfection the standard we must meet, he didn’t mean, “Unless you are perfect, I will not help you.” If that were the case we would of course be hopeless. What he meant is this: “The only help I will give is help to become perfect. You may want something less: but I will give you nothing less” (C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 171). That is to say, God intends perfection for us. The fact is, your child will not learn how to walk and to achieve an adult gate if you don’t help him. The fact is that your Christian life will not be what it should be if you do not practice godly disciplines. And so, this verse is all about training in godliness.

Perhaps it will help us to understand what Paul is saying by thinking about his statement to Pastor Timothy in verse 6. He tells Timothy to “put these things before the brothers.” He is to be “like a waiter serving guests at a table, like a merchant displaying merchandise to a customer. Or perhaps...a builder, who lays down truths ‘as a foundation for their faith’” (Stott). Whatever picture Paul has in mind, if Timothy is to be a faithful teacher (and if the elders are to be faithful as well, cf. 2 Timothy 2.2), a “good servant,” he will do two things: 1) *He will train himself* (7); and 2) *He will train his people* (6). “All the best teachers have themselves remained students. They teach well because they have learned well” (Stott).

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### COMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 10  
12:30 p.m.

Congregational Lunch &  
Ministry Report

SEPTEMBER 14  
9:30 a.m.

MOPS Resumes

6:30 p.m.

Pioneer Girls and  
First Boys Clubs Resume

SEPTEMBER 24  
5:30 p.m.

Great Commission  
Prayer Meeting

SEPTEMBER 30  
WIC Fall Festival

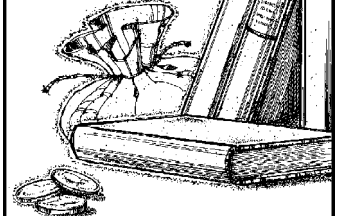
### LOOKING AHEAD

OCTOBER 28 - 29  
Reformation Conference

Choose...

*Instruction*  
instead of silver,  
*Knowledge*  
rather than gold

Proverbs 8:10



The word “godliness” occurs 15 times in the NT, 13 in the Pastoral Letters. These letters are written for the purpose of turning Christians into little Christs! But the godliness Paul has in mind is not the passivity of eastern mysticism—it is more akin to Isaiah’s “Here am I, send me.” For the real Christian, “reverent worship of God flows into obedience throughout the week” (Hughes). That godliness is rooted in Christ (3.16). Jesus is the wellspring of godliness. When we are in awe of Christ, it necessarily moves us to active obedience. That is why Paul makes such a scathing attack upon the false teachers—their teaching is a slam on the exalted Christ.

How are we then to “exercise ourselves unto godliness”? What spiritual gymnastics are we to endure? Paul speaks in very general terms here. The parallel is between nourishment and exercise—we exercise ourselves, spiritually speaking, the same way we nourish ourselves—in the Word of God. It is the wisdom of the ages and the age-old rule of the Church: “the disciplined meditation in Scripture is indispensable to Christian health, and indeed to growth in godliness” (Stott). That is why “irreverent, silly myths” (7) have no place in the life of the Christian. The Bible is the most godly book ever written—the “autobiography” of God so to speak—and you cannot help but become godly by becoming familiar with it. “Sin will keep you from this book, and this book will keep you from sin.”

In verse 9, Paul reiterates that what he is saying here is “trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.” Why? Because the reason we are exercising and training ourselves is that as we “have our hope set on the living God” (10a), the Giver of this life and the life to come will save all “those who believe” (10b). The upshot is that you and I are not to be individualists. We are not to be among those who chafe at the interconnectedness of the Church—“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” We eat the Word together and we exercise together in mutual submission.

In the end, the pursuit of godliness—diet and exercise for godliness—gets down to our motivation. It is our motivation that separates our pursuit of godliness from the form of legalism we call mere morality? What is our motivation? Paul puts it this way in verse 10: “we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior.” He has been and is our Savior. We are like a child. I go from sitting up, to rolling over, to crawling, to an unsteady toddle to the manly gate characteristic of a true Hardin—not because I hope to become a Hardin. Rather, I hope to be a good Hardin, who is a tribute to Hardins everywhere. It’s the same in the Christian life. I read the Bible and pray with devotion—I grow in my diet and discipline in the Word—not because I hope God will save me, but because He has saved me and I have my hope set on Him—and I want to honor him by becoming more and more of what he has made me to be.

Christianity is not about trying to improve upon what I am by nature—it is about becoming something that I am not—it is about becoming more and more of what God in Christ has made me. Christianity is not mere self-improvement. C. S. Lewis compared the pre-Christian idea of morality to an honest man paying his taxes: “He pays them all right, but he does hope that there will be enough left over for him to live on” (*Mere Christianity*, 167).

I began with a line from George MacDonald. I want to end with one of his pictures as well. MacDonald says that the Christian view of pursuing godliness is rather like imagining yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew those jobs needed to be done and so you are not surprised. But then he starts knocking the house around in a way that hurts and doesn’t seem to make sense. What on earth is He doing? Well, He’s building a different house from the one you thought. There’s a new addition over there, an extra floor up there, there are courtyards and gardens that never entered your mind. You thought He was going to come in and just spruce things up a bit, but He is building a palace. He’s building a palace because He intends to live in the house Himself.

His command to be perfect then is not a pipe dream—or simply the condemnation of the law to demoralize you. He has called you “gods and sons of gods” in the Bible (*Psalms* 82.6). He is going to make good on His words. He is going to make these run down, dilapidated shacks into palaces fit for a king! The process—which involves extraordinarily ordinary means of grace like reading the Bible, listening to sermons, worshiping with Christian friends, praying and observing signs and seals the Church has called Sacraments—is painful and lifelong; but that is the Christian life—nothing less and nothing more. He meant what He said. You are going to be perfect some day—and this is what and the way you are to train yourselves for godliness (Lewis, 174-175). And may God bless us in this pursuit.

## Missions Focus: Bob & Shirley Woodson, Lima, Peru

The Woodsons have been career missionaries in Peru since 1965. During their first 18 years of ministry they were located in Ayacucho, a university town in the mountains, in a teaching ministry with existing Quechua Indian churches. In 1984 they moved to Cusco to begin church planting among the Quechua people. They moved to Lima, the capital city, to start a middle class church (not Indian) in the Surco area in 1993. The church has 84 members, 3 ruling elders and its own property fully paid for. Bob has been sharing the pastorate at the Surco church with Rafael Torres. The Woodsons will leave the Surco work in December 2006 and the church will be without a senior pastor. By the time they leave, they hope to settle the pastoral situation and prepare the membership to take over full responsibility of their church. Since Bob turned 70, they questioned whether they should retire from mission work or remain active. They have decided to take a five month Home Ministry Assignment from December 2006 until May 2007. They then plan to return to Peru and work three years until Bob is 75.

**Pray for:** the successful preparation of the church for their departure in December 2006, the Lord's guidance in their decision between two possibilities of ministry when they return in May 2007 (working in a support ministry with other churches in Lima or working full time with a middle-class church plant in the suburb of Salamanca)

## September Birthdays

2	Edward Carter	19	Jeffrey Dietz
4	Marie Morgan	20	Evan Andrzejewski Caleb Mattson
5	Andrew Patterson	22	Rob Dalbey Johnny Faber Denton Lilac Blanca Schofield
6	Andrew Lintelman		
7	Ashton Crawford		
8	Amber Agate Joanne Faith	23	Karen Crawford Jared Reynolds
10	Timothy Brickner Sonny Chianese Janet Kelly	25	Rich Olshefski
11	Brian Conrad Walter Werner	26	Laurel Crawford Steve Hadzima Rachelle Hamilton Karl Lawyer
13	Martha Rau	27	Chad Vizino
14	Elsie Davis Jennifer Murphy	28	Aaron McElhinney Emily Faith
16	Julia Airgood Nancy Wilson	29	Dorothy Brown Ruth Turner Amy Sabella
18	Bob Conrad	30	Nathan Irwin

## Financial Summary January 1 - July 31, 2006

### Operating Account:

Receipts	\$ 246,042
Disbursements*	\$ 292,550

### Account Balances -

Operating Checking	\$ 4,318
Operating Saving	\$ 97,011

### Benevolence Account:

Income	\$ 65,805
Disbursements	\$ 70,630

### Deacons' Fund (year to date as of 8/28/06):

Income	\$ 16,533
Disbursements	\$ 7,778

### Account Balances -

Deacons' Checking	\$ 16,105
Deacons' Money Mkt.	\$ 2,679

\*Operating Account disbursements include the cost of paving the parking lot which will be paid from the operating savings account.

## Pioneer Girls

*Thy word is lamp unto my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119:105*

The mission of Pioneer Girls is to serve God by providing an effective and educationally sound program enabling children to follow Christ in every aspect of life.

At First Reformed our goal is, and has been, to bring young girls to the saving knowledge of Christ and to teach them how to live a Christian life in a difficult world. One way we assist the girls in achieving this goal is through our Pal/Gal program. Each girl is assigned a woman in the church. The purpose is to build relationships and exemplify a life that is committed to making Christ a priority in every aspect. These relationships are built through enjoyable and entertaining events, but are also instructive in the manner they are implemented. Prayer for the girl is the primary job of the Pal.

Throughout the evening, our clubs are multi-faceted. We help the kids have fun, learn new skills, build relationships, study the Bible, learn memory verses (Mary Sellers is the queen of memory verses!), participate in mission projects and ultimately, learn to live entirely for Christ. Club is considered an extension of the church. We are supporting what the girls are learning in Sunday School, at home, in VBS, and in other church activities.

Outreach to un-churched children was a large focus of the ministry for many years. In recent years, however, we have not had as many children come from un-churched homes. I think this has a lot to do with the dynamics that have developed in our society. Because of problems in the public schools, many families send their children to Christian schools or homeschool. This is very understandable, but it has limited the exposure of young people to un-churched families. In the future, we would like to become more of an outreach in our community.

Our theme this year is Psalm 100:2a: *Serve the Lord with Gladness*. In view of our theme, we are starting our year with a **“KICK OFF NIGHT”**. The first half of the evening will be spent participating in games, dinner, and prizes for those girls who bring a guest. It will be a night of all around fun. We will meet in our clubs for the second half of the evening. Come prepared to have a great time!

We are looking forward to kicking off a great year of programs as individual clubs and as a combined group. The clubs have new projects, games, crafts, stories, plays, memory verses, and service projects for this year. All of our programs and memory verses will be geared to emphasizing our theme of joy and gladness.

We are continually grateful for the commitment of our guides, many who have served this ministry with dedication, creativity, energy and a love for our girls and the Lord for many years (some for over 25 years) and never seem to tire. How blessed we are.

Can't wait to see all of you there!!



The family of *Janet Duch* would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all the friends from First Reformed who expressed their sympathies, shared hugs, sent flowers, and especially visited

Janet while she was ill, continuing as faithful friends all these years. Her friends in faith were especially dear to her—and continue to be dear to us.

*Thank You!*

Dear Church Family,

We would like to thank all of you for the Christian love, prayers and support you have shown to us over the last two years while Amy did not have a full-time job. It is such a blessing to be part of this family of believers.

In Christian Love,  
Bruce, Amy, Bill and Laura Airgood

First Reformed PCA  
 12900 Frankstown Road  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15235  
 412-793-7117

# September



2006

*Sunday      Monday      Tuesday      Wednesday      Thursday      Friday      Saturday*

					<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>Each Sunday:</b>                  9:30 a.m. Sunday School for all ages                  10:45 a.m. Morning Worship                  6:30 p.m. Evening Worship</p>						
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<p>4:45 p.m.                  Joint Youth Group - Kick-off Party</p>		<p>7:00 p.m.                  Plum Covenant Group</p>	<p>6:45 p.m.                  College &amp; Career Bible Study</p>	<p>7:30 p.m.                  Youth Group Steeler Party (Lawyer's Home)</p>		
<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<p>12:30 p.m.                  Congregational Lunch &amp; Ministry Report</p> <p>4:45 p.m.                  Joint Youth Group</p> <p>6:30 p.m.                  Lord's Supper</p>	<p>6:45 p.m.                  Bowling</p>	<p>6:30 p.m.                  Murrysville Covenant Group Kick-off Dinner</p> <p>7:00 p.m.                  McLane Covenant Group</p>	<p>6:45 p.m.                  College &amp; Career Bible Study</p>	<p>9:30 a.m.                  MOPS</p> <p>6:30 p.m.                  Pioneer Girls, First Boys Club, Ministry to Single Mothers</p>		
<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
<p>4:45 p.m.                  Joint Youth Group</p> <p>5:30 p.m.                  Promises</p>	<p>6:45 p.m.                  Bowling</p>	<p>7:00 p.m.                  Session Meeting</p> <p>7:00 p.m.                  Deacon's Meeting</p>	<p>6:45 p.m.                  College &amp; Career Bible Study</p>	<p>9:30 a.m.                  WIC Bible Study</p> <p>6:30 p.m.                  Pioneer Girls, First Boys Club</p> <p>7:00 p.m.                  WIC Bible Study</p>		<p>9:00 a.m.                  Presbytery Legal Seminar</p>
<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
<p>4:45 p.m.                  Joint Youth Group</p> <p>5:30 p.m.                  Promises</p> <p>5:30 p.m.                  Great Commission Prayer Meeting</p>	<p>6:45 p.m.                  Bowling</p>	<p>7:00 p.m.                  McLane Covenant Group</p> <p>7:30 p.m.                  Murrysville Covenant Group</p> <p>7:30 p.m.                  WIC Prayer Meeting</p>	<p>6:45 p.m.                  College &amp; Career Bible Study</p> <p>7:30 p.m.                  Crawford Covenant Group</p>	<p>9:30 a.m.                  MOPS</p> <p>6:30 p.m.                  Pioneer Girls, First Boys Club, Ministry to Single Mothers</p>		<p>WIC Fall Festival</p>

## Whatever Happened to the Power of the Church?

### 2006 Pittsburgh Reformation Conference

You are invited to attend the 2006 Pittsburgh Reformation Conference at First Reformed Presbyterian Church to be held October 28 - 29.

#### Conference Speakers:

**Rev. John Sartelle**

*Senior Pastor, Tates Creek Presbyterian Church*

**Rev. Phillip Hardin**

*Senior Pastor, First Reformed PCA*



## WIC Bible Studies - begin September 21

Join us in studying the book of Isaiah using Kathleen Nielson's study guide *The Lord Saves*.

**Morning Bible Study:** Meeting at Church; 1st & 3rd Thursdays at 9:30 a.m. *Childcare is available.*

**Evening Bible Study:** Meeting at the Hardins' home; 1st & 3rd Thursdays at 7:00 p.m.

Books will be ordered on September 5; please notify the church office if you plan to participate so that we may order a book for you. Cost \$7.00

