

## What Does Your Pastor Do?

Have you ever wondered what a pastor actually *does*? Everyone knows that a pastor preaches a sermon; most don't know that it takes awhile to prepare for a sermon, with time for study, writing, meeting with staff about bulletin and music, and planning special touches for worship with both the Worship Committee and Creative Worship Team. This adds up.

Much of a pastor's work is behind the scenes. And most of it doesn't take place at the church, but in the community: over lunch, in hospitals, homes, and on the road.

While nothing really describes a "typical week" for a parish pastor, the activities listed below easily fill my weeks and years here as pastor of St. Giles Presbyterian Church. I report about these things to the church Session (our leader team) each month.

1.) In 2010, I'll be participating in the **Diversity Leaders Initiative offered by Furman University's Riley Institute**. This spring, I'll meet with community leaders from religious, medical, and educational institutions as well as business to explore diversity issues in Greenville and beyond. Dick Riley is a respected former governor of South Carolina and is listed by Time Magazine as one of the most-effective presidential cabinet leaders in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; he served as Secretary of Education during the Clinton years.

This from the Riley Institute web site: "South Carolina has always been a highly diverse state. Yet, for many of our citizens, being part of that diversity has been a considerable disadvantage. Historical racial divisions and cultural legacies have created deep divides that continue to challenge social and economic progress in South Carolina. Recognizing an urgent need for diversity-related programming, the Riley Institute launched a unique program that encourages community leaders to consider the challenges and opportunities presented by the many facets of diversity in our state, including among others, differences in cultural background, language, gender, and physical ability."

2.) Much of my energies in winter are spent teaching the **Confirmation Class** (a spiritual formation experience for 8<sup>th</sup> graders). "Seekers" and their teachers begin their journey on retreat to the Montreat Conference Center in Montreat, NC. Our Seekers will get to know their three teachers and "Mentors" who will meet with them as well. Our journey will take us more deeply into scripture and theology, of course, as well as to local sanctuaries to study architecture, stained glass art, and other sanctuary symbols. Seekers are confirmed on Easter.

3.) **Writing songs** is a hobby and a way I do theology after my kids go to bed. "Quite A View," my new CD (November 2009), features Charlie Miller (St. Giles' first choir director/pianist), Joe Cash (of True Blues), Adrienne Davis, Steve Watson (of the Steve Watson Trio), Billy Ricketts, and others. I've had many conversations with leaders in the Church about religion and the arts and how creative arts (theatre, music, performance art, visual arts, etc) often give 'handles' on theology in ways liturgy does not, and how events *beyond the walls* of the church are as close to "church" as many people will ever get. I'm consulting with Jim Freeman in the doctor of ministry program at Columbia Seminary as he explores "fringe festivals," stand-up, and street theatre (minstral, bard, mime) as a tool of bearing Good News. (My CD is available in the church office or iTunes, cdbaby, Amazon.com, etc.)

4.) Every year, **Vacation Bible School** is BIG at St. Giles. This year, our church educator, Laurie Snyder, and I are writing, with input from a church team, our 2010 Vacation Bible School Curriculum.

5.) **Men's Lunch:** I meet with men of our church on Monday's for lunch. Average attendace 10 guys. If you're a man, come join us at the K&W Cafeteria on Halton Road (call the church office to make sure our location hasn't changed). We've had about 40 people join us at one time or another. About 20 of us are "regulars."

6.) While St. Giles is a “**Stephen Ministry**” congregation, Stephen Ministry is evolving at St. Giles. No one-on-one care will be offered in 2010 by our Stephen Ministers as we explore other forms of care, mainly the “Congregational Care Group” underway as a subcommittee of our Membership Committee. Stephen Ministers will contribute to the formation of this care group, which will meet every 4 to 6 weeks. We want *all members* of our church community to know the healing presence of Christ, our peace. This group will help us be more closely in touch with the needs of the flock.

7.) **Pastor visits** are important to those who are hurting, curious. As I can’t read minds, I rely on others to let me know if there are visits or calls I should be making about which I might not know.

8.) **Weddings.**

9.) **Funerals.**

10.) **Weekly Staff Meetings.** I meet weekly with Laurie Snyder, educator; Wanda Allison, office administrator; Debbie Stenzel, preschool director; Charlene Means, music director; Jacqueline Martin, youth director.

11.) **Hospital visits & pastoral care.**

12.) I try to be attentive to our **Scouts**. We sponsor pack Scouts; Jim Wills is our institutional representative with BSA 266, and CSA 150.

- **Youth Groups:** I try to support our youth by being in touch, traveling with the youth, and praying for them. Supporting our youth director is a joy.

- **Preschool:** I lead chapel monthly (alternating weeks with Laurie) during the school year. Charlene does music twice a month. Our annual Children’s Sabbaths are a great opportunity for us to welcome our preschool families to St. Giles.

- **Other Service to God in our Community:** I am committed to involvement in the larger community and breaking bread with people of faith (and not) of all stripes. I’m meeting many folk & finding ways to serve children in our community via my Kiwanis Club of Greenville (downtown). In 2009 I served on the boards of the Band Booster for Riverside Bands and Kiwanis Club. I try to nurture friendships with leaders of ministry St. Giles supports (Greenville Area Interfaith Hospitality Network, Triune Mercy Center, United Ministries, etc). I’m part of a learning group in the Diversity Leaders Initiative offered by Furman University’s Riley Institute

- **Service to God via the Foothills Presbytery:** *Foothills Presbytery* is the regional group of Presbyterians who are part of the Presbyterian Church (USA) family in the Upstate, comprised of some 65 churches and 22,000 members.(1) 2008 Chair and 2009 member of the Inspiration and Support Team. I serve as a mentor to a new minister & help coordinate fellowship events among church professionals. (2) Foothills Presbytery Worship Team, member. (Wife Rachel is chair of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, which cares for St. Giles’ ministry inquirer Pete Rogers.)

- **Service to God via the wider PCUSA:** I have written homiletical articles for Feasting on the Word a lectionary resource which is being published by Westminster Press.

- **Continuing Education:** Over the years, I’ve been intentional about my personal/professional growth.

+ From 1995 to 2000 I sought professional development at Peninsula Pastoral Counseling Center's courses on **Systems Theory** (Bowen/Kerr Family Evaluation, Friedman Generation to Generation, Kornfeld Cultivating Wholeness: A Guide to Care and Counseling in Faith Communities, Goleman Emotional Intelligence, Schnarch Passionate Marriage).

+ I've become a certified "**Healthy Congregations**" facilitator.

+ In addition to my undergraduate and seminary education (B.S., and M.Div.), I've earned 21 hours in the **Master of Fine Arts** program at Old Dominion University and continue my writing interests with professional associations (Associate Writer's Program, Presbyterian Writer's Guild, Hub City Writer's Group) and occasional conferences.

+ I have found a colleague, Rev. Dr. Jack Stephenson, with whom to consider strategies for pastoral situations in the church and personal health (what may be called pastoral "**supervision**"). Jack is a retired Clemson prof and a PCUSA minister. We meet six times a year.

+ I continue to meet with the "**Fellowship of St. Matthew**," a peer group consisting of Revs. Mary Morrison, Joseph Gaston (John Knox), Jim Caprel (First Simpsonville), Rachel Matthews, and educator Allison Kelly (Aiken, SC).

+ I now meet with a **Lectionary Study Group** quarterly consisting of Revs. Mark Stanley (St. Luke's in Hendersonville, NC) and Allen Huff (Shelby Presbyterian Church, Shelby, NC). Ask me about my studies!