



Alexandria Presbyterian Church • October 2008

Upcoming Dates

Inquirer's Class
October 3-4

Art on the Avenue
October 4

**APC Seminar:
Sexual Brokenness
and the Gospel**
October 17-18

All Church Picnic
October 19

**Newcomer's
Reception**
October 26

**APC Officer
Elections**
November 2

**Women's TableTalk
Dinners**
November 8

**Joint Worship and
Thanksgiving
Service**
November 23

**Christmas
Candlelight Service**
December 16



The Gift That Can Stop Giving *Excerpted from Harvest USA*

On October 17 and 18th, APC will host a seminar, "Sexual Brokenness and the Gospel." Pastor Tom devoted this space in last month's newsletter to talk about this important topic and introduce the seminar. This month, let's address an important question: "If sex is God's good gift, why are we so embarrassed to talk about it?"

Our culture places ultimate value in feelings and experiences. God has become irrelevant and what counts is personal pleasure. Sexual purity is mocked as quaint and passé. The suggestion of restraining sexual desire is often labeled "unhealthy" by the therapeutic community.

When the voices of our culture call, our sinful hearts eagerly believe the lie: *with sex we can make life work on our own terms without relying on God.* We can relate to others selfishly without relying on God's intended design for us. Sex becomes the god for whom we slavishly risk all. False worship and false intimacy, devilish counterfeits of God's desire and design, replace the truth that we are God's creatures designed for his glory.

Tragically, the church has too often been silent

or ambivalent about sex. We say sex is God's good gift, but we act as though it were shameful. We're often visibly uncomfortable talking about it. When we do discuss it, we fail to view it as a matter of the heart. And while we search for our voice, every cultural institution—marriage, education, government, commerce, entertainment—trumpets a distorted view of sex.

But what if sexuality were just like every other facet of Christian living—subject to idolatry and sin's distortions to be sure, but ready to be reclaimed and made new in the light of the Gospel of grace? What if God's people could replace their embarrassed silence with loving candor and speak wisely to long hidden struggles, questions, frustrations and fears? What if God offered real help in understanding, guiding and directing the sexual side of our lives?

We invite you to risk an evening and a morning to look at sexuality through the eyes of its Creator, the true and living God! Please join us by registering through the APC website or by signing up downstairs at the Information Booth in the Fellowship Hall.



Creating Space by Elder Chris Joyce

I used to work in telemarketing. True confession. The company had over 2,000 seats—telemarketing stations—and our mantra was "Your call means the world to us." It really was a fun job, though some of you will probably be tempted to call me during dinner soon. Payback. There would be justice in that, but before you pick up that handset, think about playing the mercy card instead.

A key measure of success in telemarketing is "occupancy." Just like the airline business, as I'm sure you've noticed. You've got this investment in capacity

[seats] and you want it occupied—generating income—as much as possible. More is better, at least in that business model.

I've had occupancy on my mind lately, but in a different context. I've been conscious of the occupancy of my person. Occupancy within the skin, so to speak. What occupies my mind? What's on my heart? Where are those internal moments invested?

Pastor Tom has made the point more than once—that our *idols* become most visible in our *idles* moments, that is. When your mind is a

(continued on p.2)

2405 Russell Road, Alexandria VA 22301 | 703-683-3348 (office) | 703-683-2392 (fax) | alexandriapres.org

Alexandria Presbyterian Church is a welcoming community of believers, rejoicing in the gospel, transformed by its power, and responding with grateful hearts in service to our God and world. We long to taste the glory of God in such an astonishing way that the city of Alexandria will be drawn to the majesty and mercy of our great God. It is our desire that our worship will serve as an authentic model to our city of the possibilities for transformation of individuals, families and a city encountering the glory and grace of God.



I'm Getting An Extreme Makeover by 2405 Russell Road

It's been a few years, but the time has finally come. In October, I will receive an extreme makeover... and I can't wait. I don't want to spoil the surprise for you. But I guarantee you will be overwhelmed by how much three new coats of paint and new carpet will enhance my appearance. Of course, we're not about appearances...we're about good worship. And I'm convinced that a brighter look to my sanctuary will enhance your ability to worship well on Sunday morning. And I look forward to that, too.

Yes, this makeover will require some pain. I'm going to have to endure scaffolding, drop cloths and scraping for three weeks. But I'm ready. You'll also have to endure a temporary inconvenience, as we move worship to the Fellowship Hall on October 12th and 19th. But think about how beautiful I'll look for the wonderful Christmas Candlelight Service this year! And all those other Sundays, and prayer nights, and choir practices...and other church-wide events.

By the way, I don't want to see any of those beautiful children climbing on my scaffolding some Sunday morning. Parents, please help me here.

And need I say—NO PEEKING!

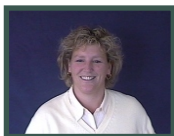
(Creating Space, continued from p.1)

blank, what rushes in to fill that vacuum? If it's that new gigunda plasma screen, or the image that popped on your computer screen earlier today, or the still-hot anger of a recent slight, then you've got a good sense of what your little idol factory is churning out these days.

In one of his many articles, Henry Nouwen makes the point that, in the spiritual life, discipline means "the effort to create some space in which God can act." An interesting thought. Occupancy for the disciple should include a regular diet of unoccupancy. A turning from the things of this world, the creation of space that the Holy Spirit will fill.

Where are the opportunities to reduce the clutter of the urgent, the demanding and the enjoyable from my own space? Have I created that vacant space to camp out in? I'm a man who tends to mistake activity for impact. Some of the disciplines of the disciple—the creation of space, the pursuit of silence, the resting in the Word—are not disciplines that I easily gravitate towards.

In that same article I referenced above, Nouwen remarks that *discipleship* and *discipline* are the same words. Ergo, as a disciple I need to be more disciplined in my pursuit of vacancy, confident that God will fill those spaces with his intent.



Children's Chatter by Leslie Bridge

I recently attended the Effective Sunday School Teaching Seminar that was held here at APC in late August. Eric Williams did a great job as he walked us through how students learn and how to effectively teach to the way they learn. One of the things that stood out significantly was teaching so that the lessons stick with the learners. He said, "Education is what is left after they forget everything else."

An important criterion for me that I look for in curriculum for our children is, will the children remember and be able to apply what they are learning? This is in step with the things we learned in the seminar. I am thrilled when I hear stories of how the kids have been able to apply what they are learning in real life situations. That means the lesson has stuck. I am grateful for the curriculum we are using, because I believe they teach children to learn lessons that stick with them.

Let me illustrate an example from VBS this year. The theme of VBS was "Discovering Jesus' Miraculous Power." Each day there was a point that would help the children remember the lesson. It was easy to remember and, as it

appears, easy to apply. Jessica White, Collin (son), Diane Wadsworth and Sarah (daughter) went to the Baltimore Aquarium one day this summer, sometime after VBS. On the way home they went through the Fort McHenry Tunnel. It was dark and Collin began to be afraid. He cried out to Jessica and Sarah answered him, "Collin, don't be afraid, Jesus gives us the power to be brave." This was one of a day's points from VBS. Did I mention that Sarah is 3 and Collin is 2? I easily get choked up when I hear stories like this, because it shows that our teaching has stuck with the children, even the little ones.

APC Giving at a Glance	Giving (through 09/2008)	\$768,384
	Budget	\$748,000

ALL-CHURCH PICNIC

FUN!

October 19th From 2-6pm

SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE:

Holy Worship – 8:50am | Time of Fellowship & Coffee – 10:30am | Sunday School for All Ages – 11:00am
Communion Celebrated the Second Sunday of Each Month