



CRESCENT SPRINGS  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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# The Clarion



Between the Times

February 2010

**O**n any given day, I struggle through the Opinions Page in *The Enquirer*. I'm not terribly sure I know why I keep reading it. Maybe it's because there's not much else in our favorite local rag to be read. It's probably really because – on very rare occasions – I discover at least a few lines in an editorial that ring true for me. It might be because I hope for the all-too-rare opportunity to find something there that might in some tiny way be worth sharing.

Would you believe it? I found it this week! There it was – as big as life and twice as natural! It was in a Leonard Pitts column. It was in the January 26th edition, and carried the rather unremarkable title “Faith isn’t found in a rifle’s sight.” The immediate reference was to Trijicon, the company in Michigan that makes sights for US military rifles that have scriptural references stamped on them. But, that wasn’t what I found to share.

What I found to share had nothing to do with rifle sights and everything to do with attitudes of mind that scream out for attention by Christian people as we approach the Season of Lent. That’s coming up very shortly – just a couple of weeks away. It’s the time when we are asked especially to examine our lives very carefully and make all possible effort to get rid of everything within us that would make celebrating the Good News of Easter difficult for us. That’s the heart of Lent.

Of stamping scripture references on rifle sights, Pitts asks: “Is this not one of the cheesiest expressions of religious faith you’ve ever seen? Not that that would make it unique. We specialize in cheesy expressions of faith here in God’s favorite country.” I laid the paper down and took a big slug out of my coffee cup. And, I realized how much truth I had just read. Pitts is exactly right. Americans in the early months of AD 2010 have the unbelievable arrogance to act as if we really were God’s favorite country – without any scriptural or other theological justification for such a

notion. And our expressions of faith all too often are pretty cheesy.

But, Pitts isn’t ready to let us up yet. “Indeed, you could build a tower unto heaven itself out of all the roadside Jesuses, prayer cloths, Ten Commandments rocks and other trinkets of a cheap, disposable faith that says nothing, costs nothing, does nothing, risks nothing, that speaks not of God, external and eternal, but only of the grubby, temporal perspectives and fears of ground-bound women and men.”

Certainly you’ve seen Touch Down Jesus – the ghastly way-bigger-than-life-size statue along I-75, barely a stone’s throw from the town where I grew up. I nearly choked when I first saw it. It’s not an image that would lead me to faith. It makes me want to run away from it. Out along I-70 somewhere in Illinois, there is an enormous cross that has the same effect. I can’t imagine that even Oral Roberts would have wanted it. Since before Christmas, there have been ads on TV hawking a “beautiful crystal cross” that has “the complete Lord’s Prayer (but only if you’re Catholic)” inside it that “miraculously appears” when you look into its center. All these things – all these really cheesy tourist trap souvenirs – don’t represent any kind of meaningful faith in anything. They don’t point to the Savior of the World who gave his life that we might live. They say nothing of the Lord’s call to us to be his missionaries in a world where people still don’t know much about him. It’s all just little junk that symbolizes nothing, and really has the effect of turning our hearts away from God’s purpose.

I’ll give Leonard Pitts the last word for this month: “truest faith is not seen in a secret code on a gun sight, a trinket from a store or words on a rock. Rather, faith is seen in the substance of a life lived in service to others, lived as if God were ‘not’ in fact one’s personal echo chamber in the sky. I submit that this is the only kind of faith that matters. And that it speaks for itself.”

--FHS

## Transformation Discernment Program Continues

In January, the Session continued with its third lesson in the year-long Transformation Discernment program. Each month the elders spend a portion of their meeting time examining our mission as a church. This is a new program from the General Assembly and CSPC is proud to be one of the first churches involved in the program.

The first lesson dealt with what it means to “abide with Jesus”. There are many definitions of the word “abide” and Session decided that for us it should mean to be engaged, alive, and motivated in Jesus Christ. Spend a moment to look up the word “abide” and see what it means for you!

The second lesson was spent deciding “who we say Jesus is”. This is a personal decision and once you have decided who He is, do you use this knowledge in your life? The third lesson in January questioned whether CSPC is a “sent” church, versus a building for meetings, internal fellowship, or programs.

## Update from the Pastor Nominating Committee

The PNC continues to meet weekly. While the Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry reviews our Church Information Form, the committee is identifying ways to let potential pastors know about the position.

## About the PCUSA Loan Program

Please consider investing in the PCUSA Investment Program. The investor (who doesn’t have to be a member of CSPC) receives a very competitive rate of return for periods as short as six months. If \$81,000 is deposited/invested with PCUSA in CSPC’s name, our monthly mortgage with the program will be reduced by \$553 per month. If an additional \$81,000 is invested, we will save another \$227.60 per month. The potential annual savings are \$6600 to \$9400 without giving any additional money to the church.

Please consider investing in the future of our church. It’s an easy way to stretch our budget.

## Looking for a way to serve?

There are several ways you can serve our part of God’s family on a regular basis. Use the sign up sheets or contact the appropriate committee chair to volunteer to:

- Bring communion bread
- Serve as church secretary for an afternoon
- Clean the church building
- Serve as an acolyte
- Volunteer at IHN

## Lenten Devotions at CSPC

*Wednesday Soup Suppers and Worship* begin Ash Wednesday, February 17, and continue each Wednesday evening in Lent. We will gather at 5:30 as a church family for a simple meal of soup and bread, and then worship at 7:00 pm together. Look for the sign up sheets to provide soup or bread.

*Daily Home Devotions* The CE Committee will be providing weekly calendars with short scripture readings and devotions to do at home each day of Lent. Did you know that Lent is the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter, not including Sundays? This season of the church calendar is a time for reflection as we prepare for the celebration of Christ’s resurrection at Easter.

## Virtus Training

Last year, CSPC hosted Virtus Training for all church members who work with children and youth. The program is being offered again at other area churches during February. The Virtus program

provides helpful information about protecting our young people and keeping them safe. The training is important for everyone who works with youth, or who volunteers with IHN.

## Friday Night Live Comes to CSPC

Friday Night Live will kick off on March 5 at 7 PM. FNL is an intergenerational fellowship opportunity for our members and our community. The program has something for everyone. In the Gathering Room, there will be a coffee house atmosphere where guests can visit with friends, enjoy Keurig coffee concoctions and fairly-traded coffee. Games and internet access will be available.

Downstairs will be a place for the young, or young at heart, to gather to play games or just hang out.

The younger children will also have an opportunity to play or watch movies.

We are in need of volunteers to “shepherd” each of these areas. The shepherds will help us shop for the items needed for each area (paid for by a grant) and get the area set up initially. Then, they will recruit volunteers for each month to set up/clean up/watch over the areas. If anyone is interested in volunteering for this new CSPC ministry, please call Sarah Cottongim (363-8575) or Jen Neal (727-1424).

Please come and plan to bring a friend!

## Second SpringFling Art Competition/Show Committee Meets

There will be a short planning meeting for CSPC’s Second SpringFling Art Competition/Show right after service at 10:45 am on Sunday, February 21. If you are interested in helping this year please attend. For more information, email or call Stephanie Thoeny, 331-7724 or sredman@modern-d-i.com.

## Session Notes

At its stated January meeting, the Session at CSPC:

- Continued with its third lesson in the year-long Transformation Discernment program.
- Received the C.E. committee report. Firesiders will conduct the worship service on February 7th for Souper Bowl Sunday. They will also host the Young at Heart Luncheon after church on February 14th.
- Received Fellowship committee report of future activities: a Chili Cook Off, game night, coffee house and Easter Egg Hunt. Additional information is coming via the Clarion, website and bulletin as each event approaches.
- Named Karen Ginn our designated commissioner to Presbytery.
- Discussed how other churches deal with the per capita expense as part of our ministry. There will be an education program on the per capita assessment in the near future.

## Calendar

February 5	Chicks with Sticks, noon - 2
February 7	Youth Service, 9:30 Souper Bowl Sunday offering
February 8	Mary Esther Circle, 12:30
February 14	Young at Heart luncheon, following worship
February 17	Ash Wednesday Soup Supper, 5:30 PM, Worship, 7:00 PM
February 19	Chicks with Sticks, noon - 2
February 21	SpringFling Committee meeting 10:45 am
February 23	Bound by Books, 7 PM