

## Reading Letters from New Testament Times

From Pastor Pete

**We write letters for all sorts of reasons. We do not write them as often as we used to, but most of us still write and receive letters of various sorts. The form may have changed from paper to email or text messages. We still write letters. We write them to keep in touch. We write them to ask for information. We write them, hopefully, to correct problems. We write them, or send cards, to congratulate, to praise, or sometimes to complain. We write letters and post cards and texts and emails in order to communicate something of importance to us to another person in hopes that they will respond in some way. Perhaps we wish an answer; perhaps we hope that the letter will bring a smile, evoke a memory, or calm a fear. We may wish to gently right a wrong, or re-connect with someone, or, we may just wish to reach out in some manner. For whatever reason we write letters with some purpose in mind.**

That is exactly the case in the New Testament. The letters are occasional. That is, the writers of the letters that we read in the Bible wrote them for some particular purpose. Something has occurred that they wish to address; an occasion has arisen which they feel needs immediate attention. The man we call Paul of Tarsus, or just Paul wrote the majority of these letters. A few were written by the apostle Peter, some by John one by James, and a couple more by persons unknown. And of course it wouldn't be biblical scholarship if there were not a few over which we fight to determine just who did write them. In each case however, they are responding to a need discerned within the community to which they write.

When we read the biblical letters we only have one side of the conversation. Herein lies the challenge that goes with understanding them. We must place them into the proper context.

Sometimes this is easy to do. Often it is not. Reading these letters is something like listening to one side of a telephone conversation. We can hear only a part of the conversation. If we are familiar with the topic, we can understand more easily. Often the conversation drifts into areas where we are unfamiliar and we get lost. The New Testament letters are the same way. When Paul discusses family relations it may not be too difficult to follow. What, we wonder, does eating meat offered to idols have to do with apps on iPhones. To discover this, we have to read with discernment. It takes some digging and some Spiritual insight and some prayer. Sometimes we still don't get it and we have to put it away for a while. One of the great Doctors of the Church, whom some have said had the greatest mind of all history, was stuck for years on a passage in one of these letters. We can expect to struggle with them from time to time. That's OK, struggling with Scripture is good.

Remember too, the letters were written to be understood. The first people to hear them as someone read to the gathered community, say the church at Corinth, knew what they meant. Thus we too can read them with this in mind. They are not meant to be deep or dark or mysterious. Quite the contrary, they were meant to clear things up, to be helpful, and to open new possibilities for faith. We, just like these ancient and newly formed churches, should gather around and hear them as if for the first time. Then we should puzzle them out together. Often when communities do this one or more persons is illuminated and sees right through to the heart of the letter. Then we know more than what Paul or Peter or James or John said to their churches, we know what God says to us.

The letters were intended to address a problem and effect a change. Without the intended change they are just interesting artifacts of antiquity. Read simply as ancient correspondence from which we can discover the social positions of early Christians, or some other such irrelevant information, they are lost to us. They have lost their usefulness as guides to living a rich Christian life. This is why we should struggle with them together, and learn from them how Christ is formed in us and transforms us and many other mysteries that are revealed through them. Just because there are parts of them that are difficult does not mean that there are not concepts that we can easily understand and begin to live so that our lives are transformed, as the lives of the early Christians were transformed, into the image of Christ.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

THANK YOU/EASTER FLOWERS/FIRST FRUITS	2
COMMUNITY LENTEN SERVICES	3
DEACON & SESSION MINUTES	4
SESSION MINUTES	5
CALENDAR	6
MISC NEWS	7





THANK YOU to everyone who served the Lord at Poke Run Church.

Thank you to our January Lectors Patrick Wilkinson, Ruthie O'Connor, Katie Ballas, and Shyrl Stange.

Thank you to our January Greeters Ruth O'Connor, Shyrl Stange, Freda Bowman, Edyth Elwood, Jack and Jane Blair, Katie and Abbey Ballas.

For our prayers Dolly Remaley, Thelma McCutcheon, Conrad McQuaide, Karen Lightner, Clifford Lightner, Irene Clark, Irma McDivitt, James Powers, Carolyn Buckley, Grace Hartman, Steve Morcheid, Robin, Tom Kimble, Grace Young, Amy McQuaide, John Chicka, Mary Margaret (Kiebler) Hott, Bob Bierer, Lil Bowman and those who serve in the military.

**Church Directory Information Needed**

If you have a new phone number or address or new email or any changes to your family please email them to our email address at pokerun@windstream.net Anyone who does not have email may send them to the church office or call 724-327-5563 with the updated information.

Information is also needed to update our mailing email list for our church newsletter, The Ranger. Please keep the church office informed as your address changes. If you would like to be removed from The Ranger mailing list please let the office know by sending an email, letter or by calling the church office. Thank you.

**EASTER FLOWERS**



**Deacons will be taking orders for Easter Flowers the month of February. They will be \$8.50 each. You can choose between Lilies; Tulips, Hyacinths and Chrysanthemums. Instead of flowers you can give \$8.50 to the Deacons in Memory of, or in Honor of a loved one and it will be given to the Westmoreland County Food Bank.**

**Look for an order form in the Sunday Bulletin or contact a Deacon.**

**FIRST FRUITS**

Poke Run Church has committed \$3,125 to Redstone Presbytery as part of their 2013 First Fruits campaign. With approximately 125 members in attendance on an average Sunday, this works out to \$25.00 per person for the year. Please help Poke Run meet this Redstone Presbytery campaign commitment.

Your giving is important and appreciated.

Budget & Finance Committee

## WEDNESDAY EVENING COMMUNITY LENTEN SERVICES

There will be **seven** Wednesday evening services during Lent starting on Ash Wednesday. So, mark your calendar and plan to attend. A time of fellowship and refreshment will follow most services. An offering to go to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance program will be taken at each service from February 13 – March 27.

- **February 13 - 7:30 PM @ Pine Run Presbyterian Church**

1117 White Cloud Road 724-727-2125

(Directions: Take Rt. 380 to Rt. 780, turn right on White Cloud Road, church is on left.)

**Preacher:** Rev. John Simpson

**Communion will be served.**

**Special Music:** Pine Run.

- **February 20 - 7:30 PM @ Poke Run Presbyterian Church**

**Preacher:** Rev. Brenda Barnes of Plum Creek Presbyterian Church

**Special Music:** Poke Run

- **February 27– 7:30pm @ Plum Creek Presbyterian Church**

550 Center New Texas Road, Plum 412-793-4525

(Directions: Take 380 West; take right onto Saltsburg Road at Cooper Trailers; at stop sign turn right onto New Texas Road, turn left onto Center New Texas Road to Church)

**Preacher:** Rev. Lanny Mellinger of Pine Run Presbyterian Church

**Special Music:** Plum Creek

- \***March 6 - 7:30 @ Union Presbyterian Church**

656 Route 380, Murrys ville 724-337-3042

(Directions: turn right on Rt. 380, church on right)

**Preacher:** Rev. Pete Goetschius of Poke Run Presbyterian Church

**Special Music:** Mass Choir

- \***March 13 There is not a Lenten Service this week.**

- \***March 20-7:30PM @ Plum Creek Presbyterian Church**

(see directions above)

**Musical Presentation—The Sacrifice** \*There will not be any refreshments after this service.

- \***March 27-Pine Run Presbyterian Church**

(see direction above)

**Drama Presentation—**\*There will not be any refreshments after this service.

**We pray that these services will be a blessing in your life and in our community.**

**\*\* In the event of bad weather:** none of the services will be canceled, and worshippers are advised to use discretion in making a decision to attend. \*\*

## Deacon Meeting December 3, 2012

Attendance: Debbie Seighman, Sheree Wagner, Erin Bruce, Laurie Powers, Karen Staymates, Jan Fitzgerald, Tammy Kelley, Ruth O'Connor, Mary Ellen Ross. We welcomed new members Nikki McQuaide and Abbey Ballas.

Treasury Report: \$4522.45

Pete opened with prayer and devotions  
 Donation to lung cancer  
 Sent 210 dozen cookies to service men.  
 Gave 5 food baskets for Thanksgiving.  
 Christmas food baskets will be delivered on December 15.  
 Christmas caroling was discussed for December 16.  
 Group meeting of all boards set for December 11.

New officers for 2013 are:  
 Moderator- Laurie Powers  
 Vice Moderator- Ruth O'Connor  
 Treasurer- Sheree Wagner  
 Secretary- Mary Ellen Ross  
 Corresponding Secretary- Tammy Kelley  
 Next Meeting: January 7, 2013- 7:pm

Pete closed the meeting with prayer.

Respectfully yours

Mary Ellen Ross

## Poke Run Presbyterian Church Session Minutes December 11, 2012 Combined Meeting of the Boards

The annual meeting of the combined boards and Session met in Fellowship Hall @ 7:00 pm. After sharing a delicious meal prepared by Cindy McQuaide. A quorum was present and, Rev. Peter Goetschius, Moderator, opened the meeting with prayer and devotions.

**Elders present:** Rev. Peter Goetschius- Moderator, Connie Cauvel - Clerk, Bob Thompson, Tim Martin, Cindy McQuaide, Meri Slausenhaupt, Linda Chicka, Glenn Ross, Grace Hartman and Sandy Chappell, Ron Hileman, Josh Porterfield.

**Elders excused:** Bob Bierer, Linda Chicka Elizabeth Wilkinson

**Decans Present:** Jan Fitzgerald, Sheree Wagner Mary Ellen Ross, Nikki McQuaide, Debroah Ross. Laurie Powers, Karen Staymates

**Trustees Present:** Bob Wilson, Doug Ross, Mario Tagliati, Walt Lang

Devotions:

Pete led us in exercise to create a vision for Poke Run that we can all work toward.

Create a vision: In 5 years we want to be a church that: \_\_\_\_\_

It was suggested to have one night as a board meeting for Session, Trustees and Deacons.

Mary Ellen Ross also suggested that we put a suggestion box in the back of the church.

Doug Ross: "We are all an island here.. need to be aware of other churches and visit them"

Cindy McQuaide heard from new people attending Poke Run that they like the way people are talking in this church people networked out and caring about each other!

**MSC:** To approve the Session Minutes of November 19, 2012

**MSC:** To accept the Deacon Minutes of November 5, 2012

**MSC:** To accept the Trustee Minutes of October 25, 2012

**Treasurer report:** Amy Wilkinson

**MSC:** To accept the Treasurer's Report

**Budget & Finance:** Tim Martin

Giving up 35 % over last year and our investments are doing well

**Christian Ed:** Lizzy Wilkinson

Tim will put request in Bulletin and Ranger to ask for someone to volunteer to be the chairperson for Christian Education.

**Mission and Stewardship:** Linda Chicka

Robin will meet with us to give us an up date on her activities

**Personnel:** Everyone is very pleased with Choir - Special thanks to Sean.

**Congregational Life:** Glenn Ross

Will not meet in December. Communion cards will be in the Pews one card per person and information will be recorded on a spreadsheet.

**Technology:** Committee will meet Monday December 17.

**Pastor Pete's report:** December 2012

Spaghetti dinner on Nov. 17 Funeral for Lois Enrich November 25 at Vaia's. Ruth Speer, funeral November 28 at Poke Run. Baptism for Alivia Claire Ankney on December 2, 2012

**Old Business:**

Thank you to Grace Hartman, Bob Bierer and Lizzy Wilkinson for their service on Session.

Valerie Hansen and Doug Ross will send post cards with information about our Christmas Eve Services

**New Business:**

Welcome new Session members: Sandy Chappell, Ron Hileman, and Josh Porterfield. Special thanks to

Bob Thompson for continuing on Session for another term

Consider one night for the Meeting of all the Boards.

**MSC:** Jan 27 Baby shower 2:00 – 5:00 PM Lil and Freda Bowman hosting.

**MSC:** To remove Emma and James W. Dunmire. Stephanie Bruce Kennedy, Natalie Bruce Evans and Tyler W. Bruce from the Poke Run Roll at their request. A letter will be sent to each of the above.

Close with prayer: Glenn Ross

Respectfully Submitted:

Adjourn: 8:45 P.M.

Approved: January 8, 2013



Connie Cauvel (Clerk of Session)



## February 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p><b>Communion 2/10</b>—Meri Slaugenhaupt &amp; Karen Staymates</p> <p><b>Communion 2/13</b>—Session</p> <p><b>Offering-PW</b></p>					1	2
<p><b>3</b></p> <p>8:30 &amp; 11am Worship 9:45am Sunday School 7pm Bible Study</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>7pm Deacons</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>7pm Budget &amp; Finance 7pm Youth Choir</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>6pm Bell Choir 7pm Choir</p>	<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>9</b></p>
<p><b>10 Communion</b></p> <p>8:30 &amp; 11am Worship 9:45am Sunday School 7pm Bible Study</p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>7pm Mission &amp; Stewardship</p>	<p><b>12</b></p> <p>7pm Session 7pm Youth Choir</p>	<p><b>13</b></p> <p>Lenten Service 7:30pm @ Pine Run</p>	<p><b>14</b></p> <p>6pm Bell Choir 7pm Choir</p>	<p><b>15</b></p>	<p><b>16</b></p> <p>9-12 WC Food Bank</p>
<p><b>17 Communion</b></p> <p>8:30 &amp; 11am Worship 9:45am Sunday School 7pm Bible Study</p>	<p><b>18</b></p>	<p><b>19</b></p> <p>7pm Youth Choir</p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p>Lenten Service 7:30pm @ Poke Run</p>	<p><b>21</b></p> <p>10am Cong Life 6pm Bell Choir 7pm Choir 7pm Circle 2</p>	<p><b>22</b></p>	<p><b>23</b></p>
<p><b>24</b></p> <p>8:30 &amp; 11am Worship 9:45am Sunday School 7pm Bible Study</p>	<p><b>25</b></p>	<p><b>26</b></p> <p>7pm Youth Choir</p>	<p><b>27</b></p> <p>11:30am Soup for the Soul Lenten Service 7:30pm PlumCreek</p>	<p><b>28</b></p> <p>6pm Bell Choir 7pm Choir</p>		

Circle 2 will be held at the church this month.

Please know that extra dirt piles located in the Poke Run Cemetery will be removed when weather and ground conditions improve.  
*Thank you for your patience.*

## POKE RUN YOUTH GROUP

The Junior/Senior High Youth Group from Poke Run has been invited to join with the Vandergrift Presbyterian Youth Group during our time of transition. Vandergrift's Youth Group is currently preparing for the 30 Hour Famine; learning about hunger in the world and how we as Christians can take action against this crisis. The group meets at 6:30 PM on Sunday evenings at Vandergrift Presbyterian Church, 193 Washington Avenue, Vandergrift, PA. For more information please contact Laurie Martin at 724-727-3361 or Bev Pounds at 724-845-7661.

## PW NEWS

Poke Run's Presbyterian Women will meet on Tuesday, March 5 at 7:00PM in Fellowship Hall. The Participating Women and Circle 4 will be hostess and the leader.



Special thanks to Nadene Bruce for her many years of service as Poke Run's Financial Secretary.  
(Bench handmade by Cliff Dupill)

Please join us for our  
monthly free  
*Community*  
*"Soup for the Soul"*  
*Luncheon*  
**AND BRING A FRIEND!!!!**



**February 27, 2013**  
Doors open at 11:30am  
Soup's on at NOON!

*Poke Run Presbyterian Church*

1091 Poke Run Church Rd.  
Apollo, PA 15613

Phone: 724-327-5563

E-mail: [pokerun@windstream.net](mailto:pokerun@windstream.net)

Web Site: [www.pokerunchurch.com](http://www.pokerunchurch.com)



Ash Wednesday, February 13th

Community Lenten Services schedule inside.

February 13th, 20th, and 27th, March 20th and 27th

Thank you so much for your patience as you "awaited" the February Ranger. I have been filling in for Secretary Lil as she recovers from her fall. Please excuse any and ALL mistakes and typos

—as the kids text: "LOL"  
Amy Wilkinson

