



From Our Pastor

We Miss You

I would like to invite each of you to come talk to me, or any Elder, about what would make Deer Creek Shores a more engaging and inviting place for you to worship and have fellowship.

Some things are working well. For example, at the Place last month it was a real joy to see a turnout of all ages—with a spirit for helping and serving. It was fun and worthwhile.

No doubt there is a core of the Deer Creek Church family that is still thriving. And, we've all noticed the declining numbers on Sunday morning and the people who have dropped out for various reasons.

I want you to know I have talked to almost all of them. One disappointing response is, "we'll be back." I realize that sounds like a great response. The disappointment surfaces weeks and months later when they still have NOT been back, yet have no reason they are willing to voice. About 10, roughly a third of those who left, have given me some form of negative feedback on our denominational polity, how I preach, or the traditional style of worship we have.

Many people come just a few times a year and consider DCSPC their church home. We'll see some this Christmas!

There is an negative side effect of sporadic attendance. When visitors come, and we do get a steady trickle, they look around at the empty spots on the pews and ask me how many members we have. I wish you had been here that Sunday so they could have gotten to know you!

Some visitors tell me they were glad they worshipped here but are looking for a place with "more

going on." I explain that many people travel, others have second homes elsewhere, there are swimming and sports for the children etc... etc....but that doesn't alter the reality of less than 100 people on Sunday—sometimes 50 or less.

Mainstream churches across the country have similar issues. It seems at times like fewer and fewer care about the Lord, or their place in God's kingdom.

Yet, there is also an exciting movement taking off across the PCUSA and the world. God's Spirit is stirring God's people to do new things, reach new people, change lives, and transform communities. Our Reformed heritage demands that we pay attention to this movement—*Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda!* (Church reformed, always reforming!)

This call from the Reformation invites us, as disciples who worship and serve a living God, to be open to being "re-formed" according to the Word of God and the call of the Spirit. For example, I know of two congregations that sold their church building and used all the money to establish new mission programs. They felt God's call to new aspects of ministry and have been blessed by responding.

How might God renew the spirit and vitality of life here at Deer Creek? One thing is certain, God is up to something new—thanks be to God!

Yours in Christ,
Rev. John Martin

Remember: Jesus is the reason for the season. When someone wishes you a "Happy Holiday," you can say "thank you, we will be celebrating Christmas. Come join us!"