Dear Pompton Friends and Family,

Before anything else, New Year’s greetings to all reading this newsletter. This page is being written in the days prior to Christmas. The church is abuzz with plenty of wonderful activity, as we prepare to celebrate our Savior’s birth. Early in December was our annual congregational meeting. That meeting ran longer than anyone expected—thus ending my annual promises of "45 minutes or less." But here is my pastor’s report that was delayed until now:

In June of 2011, I quietly celebrated the 30th year of my ordination to Minister of Word and Sacrament. This means that including my three seminary years, I have been preaching regularly since 1978. Yet the weight and the privilege and the joy and the challenge of preaching has never been greater. We live in a culture with so many voices crying for our attention, offering success, satisfaction and security. But there is nothing to compare with how the Holy Spirit can move when the Word is faithfully proclaimed, and reorient lives in a different direction. People are responding to Jesus Christ, and giving him premier place in life.

We preachers proclaim Good News, and point to the profound ways that the message of Christ penetrates, challenges, comforts, uproots, stretches and transforms lives. I do not take lightly the trust that you invest in me each week to be in the Word, to study and to listen and to pray. I dare say that my colleague, Debbie Rundecker, would say the same. We vow to devote our finest efforts to this task, and welcome your prayers and support, and your comments. I have an ever-growing stack of books on preaching and discipleship and worship. So, we step into this new year wide open as to how the Spirit will guide, bless, challenge and inspire us in proclaiming and living the message of Jesus Christ. To "borrow" a line my colleague often uses to close her letters, I am grateful to be On The Journey with you.

In Jesus,
Pastor Tom Bartha
"January is the quietest month in the garden. ... But just because it looks quiet doesn’t mean that nothing is happening. The soil, open to the sky, absorbs the pure rainfall while microorganisms convert tilled-under fodder into usable nutrients for the next crop of plants. The feasting earthworms tunnel along, aerating the soil and preparing it to welcome the seeds and bare roots to come."
- Rosalie Muller Wright, Editor of Sunset Magazine, 1/99

So near as I can tell, we are somewhere between Zone 6 and Zone 7 for gardening purposes. According to the seed catalogs and gardeners I know, I should have my garden all planned out and be ready to start my seedlings by the end of next month. This morning ,I took a look at my backyard and realized that I am WAY behind. There are a few chairs still sitting on the patio which need to go into the shed, the fire pit didn’t get put away yet (in hopes that I will still be able to sneak in at least one more fire before winter really bears down on me) and there are yet still a few leaves which have missed my rake.

I am grateful that the coming of spring and the new growth that happens in my backyard is not dependent on my efforts. If it were, I suspect I would never see my lilacs bloom again.

It is kind of like that with God, too, I think. In the quiet routine of our spiritual journey, God is working in and through us to prepare the way for new growth, new life. God is busy using the difficulties of our lives as nutrients for a new crop of opportunities to practice the art of caring for others. In our questions and uncertainty God aerates our souls, breaking through the hardness of our hearts so that we may welcome the seeds of faith he scatters in our circumstances which grow into roots firmly planted in the love with God has given us in Jesus.

May God bless us with the faith to know that, while nothing may seem to be happening on the surface of our lives, God is always preparing us for new growth, always offering us a new beginning. All we need do is accept the Gift and allow it to change us.

Happy New Year!

On the Journey,
Pastor Debbie
**MEMORIAL GIFTS**

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**BIRTHDAY GIFTS**

Lorna Carroll
Leslie Carroll
Moira Carroll
Wilma McKechnie
Betty Sisco
Matt Evangelista

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**Pompton Reformed Church 200th Anniversary News**

Keep an eye out for historical artifacts!

Since 2012 is our Celebratory Year, there will be displays within the Sanctuary of various items concerning the history of our Congregation.

The first “artifact” is a framed map of the original arrangement of the pews. Originally the pews were rented by the families of the Church. The annual rental fee could be a little as 31 cents per year. The diagram shows the family names of the renters. In addition, there are side pews on both sides of the pulpit for the Elders and Deacons. It was their responsibility to ensure that the sermons were scriptural. In addition, on display in the History/Prayer Room is a contract concerning a pew rental.
A Mind is a Terrible Thing

How forgetful are you? Have you ever forgotten where you left your car keys, misplaced your eyeglasses, or forgotten an appointment? Well, if you're human, the answer has got to be "YES".

Are these memory lapses signs of a deteriorating memory? Definitely not, according to neurological research. In fact, even though many people believe that they have a bad memory or are losing their memory, it usually is not so. If you think about the millions of things each day that you DO remember, you'll realize that your memory is really quite astounding.

For example, consider the routine act of meeting a friend for dinner. At minimum you have to remember:
- Your friend's face and name
- The history of your relationship
- The concept of time
- The actual time of your dinner date
- The restaurant at which you will be eating
- Directions for getting there
- How to drive your car
- How to read the menu
- The taste of different foods and if you like them
- To bring along money or a credit card, plus many other details

All of this information, along with the capacity to store, recall, and analyze it, is a mere fraction of what's stored in the roughly three pounds of tissue that make up the brain. The basic building block of the brain is the nerve cell, or neuron. Your brain contains approximately 10 billion neurons. They connect with each other via electronic impulses sent and received through contact points called synapses. Each sound, image, feeling, or event we perceive activates a unique subset of these synapses. Each time the memory is recalled, that same pattern is reactivated, making the connections stronger and more indelible. Thus, the memories you recall most often become the most ingrained.

Temporary or permanent?

Scientists talk about two different kinds of memory: working (short-term) memory and long-term memory. Information in short-term memory lasts twenty seconds or less and then is gone, unless that information is moved to long-term memory. An example of working memory is looking up a phone number and remembering it just long enough to dial it, and then it's gone. Deep within the brain a structure called the hippocampus acts as a filter and decides what gets moved to long term memory. Certain bits of information get through and others are discarded. What is the hippocampus stops functioning? It would be possible to carry on a perfectly intelligent conversation with a new acquaintance but, if that person left the room and came back five minutes later, there would be no memory of ever having met this person.

*Is there hope?*

It is common knowledge that stimulating the brain with new information is valuable in maintaining a sharp mind. Researchers say you can improve your ability to recall information by doing one simple thing: PAY ATTENTION. Do you think about other things when people are speaking? Everyday life can distract us from focusing on the details. Losing your keys is probably just a sign you were distracted and didn't pay attention when you put them down.

It's the beginning of a whole new year and a whole new opportunity to stimulate your mind. God has given us this wonderful mechanism that performs a multitude of functions. Understanding how the brain works is a bit of a stretch but keeping it active is a simple matter of awareness. Blessings in the coming year -- let's see now, where did I put my keys?
Consistory Roundtable of Thanks!

--Outgoing consistory members: Eva Terhune, Keith Hanisch, Glenn Oleksak, Edward VanSchaack, John Nelson, and Elaine Peacock (Elaine was filling a one-year unexpired term, and is eligible to serve another three-year term).

--Donna DeBlock, Valerie and Cindi Petrides for the lovely seasonal decorating of our sanctuary.

--For the abundance of volunteers and all the generous donations of time and finances and gifts for the Holiday Stroll, Thanksgiving meal assistance, Toys for Tots mission opportunities, Sue’s Kids Christmas gifts, and for touching so many lives with Christ’s love. Thank-you, Lord, for the privilege of giving and serving in your name!

Dear Church Family,
I'd like to thank you so much for your generous scholarship gift. Ever since I started school in the spring of 2011, so many of you have offered me encouragement. It's hard to express how much that has meant to me. I feel so blessed by your support and encouragement.

God Bless,
Sabine

Thanks from Bruce, Susan, Meredith and Emily Davis for all the cards, calls, prayers and words of support following the passing of Bruce's father, Bill. They were all very much appreciated.

Thanks!
Bruce
RING OUT WILD BELLS
by Elaine Peacock

There is a hymn we sing called "Ring Out Wild Bells" - it always makes me think of New Year's and the promise of the New Year that is dawning. The bells are ringing out the old, our old bad habits, our parts of ourselves we would like to keep hidden, and giving us a fresh new year to start over, the chance to change the things we dislike about ourselves, the chance to draw nearer to GOD and make a difference in the world around us. This year, New Year's Day is on Sunday, what a wonderful way to start 2012 to be with our PRC family and welcome in 2012, our 200th Anniversary year, singing and praising GOD together. You can't miss me! I'll be the one with the bulletins wishing you a Happy New Year. See you there!

Written by a Proud Grandparent
by: Helen Gioia

My grandson, sophomore Kevin Magee, was quarterback for the Pompton Lakes HS football team when the fantastic Pompton team beat its long-time rival, Butler, on Nov. 23. Although the two teams haven't played against each other for 30 years, Kevin, an honor roll student, was praised by the media for being an amazing quarterback for that game. However, he gave all the credit to the great team. In addition to beating Butler, the team became State Champs by beating Glen Rock at MetLife Stadium last month. On their way home from the game, they were loudly escorted to Hershfield Park by the Pompton Lakes Fire Department, Police Department and the Pompton Lakes /Riverdale First Aid Squad who had their sirens blaring.

This is a very proud time for the team, their families, and the whole town of Pompton Lakes.
January 1 - Sacrament of the Lord's Supper
* Epiphany - January 6 *
January 8 – Installation & Ordination of new elder and deacons
January 15 – Healing Service

Cereal, spaghetti sauce, pasta, canned fruit, tuna fish, jell-o, pudding, soup, peanut butter and jelly.

The deadline for February’s newsletter is January 23, 2012.