



Upcoming Dates

Explorers Christmas Party
December 7

Pancake Brunch
December 7

Newcomers' Reception
December 14

Christmas Candlelight Service
December 14

PROTAS Christmas Party
December 20

Sonship Begins
January 11

Communicants Class Begins
January 15

Inquirer's Class
February 6-7



Are You Adopted? by Pastor Tom Holliday

"Adoption is a family idea, conceived in terms of love, and viewing God as father. In adoption, God takes us into His family and fellowship, and establishes us as His children and heirs. Closeness, affection and generosity are at the heart of the relationship. To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the father is a greater thing." —J.I. Packer

Soon, the Sonship ministry will begin again at APC. January 11, 2009 will be the first night when we together will contemplate the truths contained in Dr. Packer's words. If you are new to APC, you should know that we consider Sonship one of the pillars of discipleship at our church. This is a course that we hope everyone will take at least once during their time at APC. It's that important.

The premise of Sonship is that all of God's people have been legally adopted into God's family on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ. It has been my experience, both as a man and pastor, that most of us struggle to understand this amazing doctrine called adoption.

Although as Christians we certainly understand that we are justified by grace through faith, we find it hard to believe that we are *sanctified* by grace through faith. Many people would say something like: "I know that I've been saved by grace, but I am sanctified by good works." Is this statement true? Thankfully, no. Yet it doesn't stop us from thinking and feeling this way. As many of us have learned the hard way, this thinking can lead us into feelings of guilt and believing that we never measure up. Before long, we find ourselves identifying with the Galatians, who were asked by the apostle Paul, "What has happened to all your joy?"

How does this square with Dr. Packer's statement? How do we explain the lack of closeness, affection and generosity in our relationship with our heavenly Father? And why is this so often reflected in our relationships with other people? Many of us quickly acknowledge that our sins have been forgiven and that we have assurance of going to heaven one day. But why don't we manifest the joy and power that belongs to children who know they are loved and cared for by Almighty God, who is not only our judge, but loving father?

If you can identify with these questions, let me ask you to prayerfully consider joining us on Sunday nights from 5:00-7:00pm. Each week you will be challenged by excellent teaching on the doctrine of adoption—with an emphasis on applying these truths to your life personally. The format is: large group teaching via video, followed by Q&A, and then we break into small groups. Your group of four or five will afford you the opportunity to process these truths in a safe and stimulating atmosphere. Over the period of sixteen weeks, you may well find yourself making deeper connections both with God as your Father, and with your small group of brothers or sisters.

I welcome you to join us on this spiritual journey, whether this is your first time or fifth time. Many of us who have taken Sonship repeatedly can testify that we missed a lot of truth the first time around. If you long for more joy in your life and a deeper sense of God as your heavenly father, this is an excellent opportunity to dive into God's word and see all that He has for you. All we need is your name on the Sonship sheet at the Information Booth downstairs in the Fellowship Hall.



I Need a Bailout by Elder Chris Joyce

It's hard to open the mail these days. Or go on a few particular websites, e.g., Fidelity, Vanguard, Schwab et al. The behavioral literature of finance describes me well. I don't want to recognize the "now condition" of my portfolio. My personal balance sheet has been battered by the stock market storm. The last time I opened my 401K statement, it reminded me of that scene in *Godfather One*, when Don Corleone carries Sonny's bullet-riddled carcass into the undertaker's basement, then extends his arms, crying out..."Look what they did to my beautiful boy...use all of your restorative powers...I don't want his mother to see him like this."

Better to recall what was, or what might have been. Maybe if I just avoid those statements, and those headlines, and that chatter around the water cooler, I'll feel better. And

sleep through this one. Pull an investor Rip van Winkle, and wake up to a wonderful new reality. That 60's hit repeats in my mind, with substitute lyrics...*He fell asleep in the woods one day, Dow then rose and made his day!*

Which got me thinking about bailouts. How could I get one? After all, why not? As my mother-in-law is fond of saying, "What am I—chopped liver?"

So I pulled everything together—gathered up all those statements, asset lists, obligations, etc.—and sat down with my local banker. Mark. A good guy. Also a member of the same church. He'll help me out, I reason.

Mark-the-friendly-banker-and-fellow-believer pushed my paper pile around his desk for a few minutes, grunting, then rocks back on his chair, so he's balanced on the back legs. Now that's *risky*, I think.

(continued on p.2)

OFFICER SPOTLIGHT: Paul Steketee, Deacon



Paul was born in Montpellier, France to MTW missionaries John and Liz Steketee. Shortly after birth, his parents were assigned to minister in the Ivory Coast, where Paul and two sisters were raised. They attended the International Christian Academy during elementary, middle, and high school. By the grace of God, Paul came to saving faith at a very young age.

Throughout college at The Citadel, Paul was blessed with a wonderful church family and was able to participate in Campus

Outreach. Both were catalysts for further growth in his walk with the Lord. Paul graduated and was commissioned into the United States Marine Corps. A year later he married his wife, Gretchen. The Steketees have seen God's blessings with wonderful church families in North Carolina as well as in Virginia at APC.

The Steketees now live in Alexandria and have truly seen the Lord's hand at work in leading them to APC and calling Paul to serve as a deacon. Both have remarked how readily the body of Christ is evident at APC in the love and outreach which are poured out to the community.

(Joyce, continued from p.1)

"So what's your question?" He's still delicately perched at that 40 degree angle.

"Am I eligible?" I ask that in a low voice, a bit embarrassed.

"Nope." Dismissive. He doesn't say "it depends." No probing questions. No helpful advice. Just "nope".

"How come? I mean, what would it take to get me eligible?" Come on, brother, I'm thinking, give me a hand here.

"You have to be bankrupt. Insolvent. Illiquid. Caput."

"But I must be," I whine. "Can't you see? Actually...actuarially...I am bankrupt. Think about it. I'm 60 years old. In the 4th quarter of life. My best income—producing years are behind me. The big cash outlays approach—long term care, hip replacements, and who knows what else. I'm toast." My hands are open, palms up, on his desk. I try to get a little quiver going in them.

"No sale," he opines. In spite of my whines.

"OK then, tell me this. What would it take? What would I have to do to prove I'm eligible?"

"Liquidate everything. The house. The clothes. The cars. The 401K. Use it all to pay off your debts. If you have \$1 left, you're ineligible." All delivered with that smug expression, to boot.

"But wait a minute," I protest. "Citibank didn't have to do that. They

didn't have to do *anything*. Why should I? That's just not fair."

"This isn't about fair, friend. It's about bailouts. You don't get to decide the terms. He does."

He? Who's he? What is Mark-the-unfriendly-banker-and-maybe-fellow-believer talking about?

"The big guy," he answers my unvoiced question. "He decides. It ain't about eligibility. It's about grace."

My mind spins. Grace? What's grace got to do with commerce? And bailouts? Stunned, I bolt up from the chair, ready to fight my corner. And awake. The bedcovers are mangled around my legs. The pillow's a bit moist. Must have been grinding those molars again. It's morning. A new day.

Yet for some reason, I feel better. It's not up to me. What a relief. I don't have to prove I'm worthy, or eligible. Or anything. He—the Big Man—knows I'm bankrupt. Spiritually. All I have to do is liquidate everything...my faith in my balance sheet, my dependence on toys and trinkets, my confidence in my own goodness, my pride...and declare myself insolvent. In need of a bailout. Incapable on my own. In desperate need of a rescue...a savior. Nothing in my hand I bring, only to the cross I cling.

That's good news. That's gospel.

SERVING OPPORTUNITIES

Christmas Giving Opportunity: Each year, APC receives names of needy families and seniors in the City. We have the opportunity to show these folks the compassion of Christ by bringing them gifts, food vouchers, a Bible and a copy of the Jesus Film. If you or your Fellowship Group would like to sponsor a senior or a family, contact chris.sicks@alexandriapres.org. The City suggests spending about \$100 per person. Gifts are to be delivered in person between Dec 15 and 21. (The deacons will give you the food vouchers, Bible and Jesus film.)

Christmas Candlelight Service Volunteers: We need 15 helpers throughout the day and evening, to assist Matt Schaefer, APC Hospitality Chair, for the Candlelight Service reception set up and then clean up on December 14th. There is a volunteer sign-up table downstairs. For more information you can also email Matt at newMASappeal@schaeferservices.com.

Welcome,
Holy Child

**2008 Christmas
Candlelight Service**
Sunday, December 14th
Brass Prelude | 5:45pm
Service | 6:00pm
Reception follows

Join us—and invite a friend or neighbor—for APC's annual celebration of our Lord and Savior's birth. This event provides a wonderful opportunity to invite someone to our church and to hear the Gospel message. Invitation postcards are available at the Information Booth or in the foyers for you to pass along to others, or forward the "e-card" we recently sent out.

This special Christmas concert event will begin at 6:00pm, with an instrumental prelude at 5:45pm. It will feature special readers, the APC choirs and instrumentalists, and carol singing by candlelight. A reception will follow downstairs immediately after the service. There will be no other Sunday evening activities.

Childcare will be provided from 5:45 to 8:30pm, including special Christmas activities for kids ages 3-6. To help us determine the number of kids participating and plan for these activities, we are asking that you sign up your children in advance (although this is not required to participate). You may do so at the Information Booth.

APC Giving at a Glance

Giving (through November)	\$929,266
Budget (YTD 2008)	\$946,000
Shortfall	\$16,734 (-2%)

****Last day to submit an offering in 2008 is Sunday, December 28th.****

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