

Dialogue

First Baptist Church of Lewisburg
51 South Third Street
Lewisburg, PA 17837
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From the Pastor:

Some weeks back the local paper ran a story about a family whose Christmas gift for their child, a bicycle, had been stolen from their porch. Reacting to the theft, the family had written and posted a letter which read "To the dirty, rotten, soul-less thief who stole our son's bicycle..." and went on to say that perhaps the letter would make them reconsider and return the bike, but that the letter writer wasn't holding his or her breath.

It was an interesting letter, from a religious point of view, because among the bad names the anonymous thief was called was "soul-less". Probably it was felt that anyone stealing a brand-new bike in a child's size this time of year should have surmised it was purchased as a Christmas present. How could anyone with a soul deliberately deprive an innocent child of what loved ones had gotten him for Christmas? From that consideration it's not hard to add "soul-less" to the "dirty" and "rotten" terms in which the criminal is addressed publicly.

However, all Christmas is against it. "It's a Wonderful Life" makes no pretense that grasping Mr. Potter repents or reforms because of the Christmas miracle rescuing George Bailey, but an awful lot of the rest of our Christmas message is that the most miserable of creatures can be transformed by Christmas. Scrooge, of course, is touched somewhere in the depths of his greedy, misanthropic soul to see life anew by the visit of the three spirits. The Grinch hears the Whos singing despite the loss of their gifts, and for the first time apprehends the splendor of the day. The State of New York, represented by the court investigating the committal of Kris Kringle, sides with Santa versus the store psychologist in the "Miracle on Thirty-Fourth Street," but the transformation really takes place in the little girl and her mom, whose guarded and skeptical hearts are swept away by Kris's triumph. If Christmas the way Americans keep it tells us anything, it's that the season counts on the power of Christmas to make over souls.

That, in turn, counts on the unpleasant, ungrateful, compassionless members of society to have souls. Victims of mean spirited crime may hate the criminal, and who can blame them? All of us, however, sooner or later, have to hope that other human beings in this world, no matter what they have done and no matter what they think about whether they have a soul or not, do have a

free to think, bound to serve

Church Office: (570) 524-7438

Pastor: The Rev. MacKenzie Scott

e-mail: fbcblbg@lewisburgbaptist.org

web page: www.lewisburgbaptist.org

denomination's web page: www.abc-usa.org

soul.

A long-standing rationale for the way humans treat other creatures is the idea that humans have a monopoly on the possession of a soul. Persons who love companion animals and vegetarians object to this assumption because of the license it gives our dominant species to exploit, kill, and ignore the animals we trap, eat, or allow to become extinct. Despite the Bible's part in distinguishing between human and non human sentient beings, don't the qualms of animal lovers seem more consistent with a God of Love--the God Jesus reveals in John's gospel--than the unreflective impatience with which many of us dismiss the questions raised by our relationship with animals?

That's a large question in itself. Jesus, however, compared the lot of humble creatures with our own, using the sparrow to reassure us of God's care. If we consider how other creatures suffer due to our idea that they don't have a "soul", doesn't it make sense to insist that humans have souls, no matter how much evil the human heart can harbor? The criminal's soul may be deformed, or dormant, or diseased. The saint's soul is beset by sin.

Everyone's hope is in the grace of God, and society's hope-- the hope for folks who want to leave a bicycle on the back porch without its being stolen by strangers-- is that the worst of us do have the potential to recognize, at last, our place before God, and with contrition and elation learn to live for justice, love, and

Peace. Mac

BOARD OF DEACONS' MEETING -

The monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons was held at 7:00 p.m. on December 12, 2011, at First Baptist Church, with Moderator Sally Nyquist presiding. Also present were Pastor Mac Scott; Financial Secretary - Judy Mickanis; Recording Secretary - Lucie Rivoire Knauer; Treasurer - Mike Wilson; Property - Bob Murcek; Christian Education - Cathy Platusich; Finance - Jim Elmore; Missions - Jan Rolecki; Watchcare - Diane Meixell; Church School - Lori Wilson; Fellowship - Joyce Wilson. As a major item of business pertained to maintenance of the church buildings, Property Committee members Alan Barrick and Terry VanBuskirk were also in attendance.

The Moderator opened with thoughts from the book of I Peter, where Christians are instructed

on various ways to serve God faithfully. A brief prayer followed.

Minutes of the November meeting were approved as published. The Financial Secretary reported that offerings to date total \$89,570.45 in subscriptions and \$2,825.10 from the plate. It is certain that we will meet the projected subscription income of \$90,000, but plate offerings will likely fall short of the anticipated \$5,000.

PROPERTY - Committee chair Bob Murcek shared his concerns about funding major repairs and renovations. In addition to considering costly enhancements such as an elevator and air conditioning, the committee has identified various long-term recurring expenses that go beyond annual maintenance and repair costs. Given the size and age of the church building, a single project such as exterior painting or re-roofing would require more money than the committee's current line item allotment for an entire year. Without access to sufficient funds, it is difficult for the committee to seek bids and secure contractors; often large-scale projects have been carried over to another year. Alan presented a chart of projects presently under consideration. The cost of completing the two most urgently needed (Third Street entrance and painting of exterior woodwork) amounts to more than \$50,000.

Ideally, the church would establish a contingency fund to which \$8,000 - \$12,000 would be added annually, so that money would accumulate between large expenditures and be available when needed. Despite efforts to follow this practice, monies intended for such a fund have been needed to balance the general budget. In recent years, several projects have been covered by using a portion of a significant bequest to the church. Another approach has been to organize a fund-raising campaign.

An informal discussion ensued concerning spending bequest monies directly, versus adding them to the endowment fund and withdrawing only the interest. The Finance Committee will study the situation and will determine potential solutions to the Property Committee's concerns. In the meantime, there was consensus among the Deacons authorizing Property to engage a contractor for the Third Street project (entrance and sidewalk), with financing to be addressed as needed.

PASTOR'S REPORT: Two funerals were held at the church in recent weeks: that of Kitty Bowe and Richard Budd. Mac remarked that on both occasions the hospitality offered by the church was ample and attentive, thanks to Diane and to everyone who assisted. Mac also reported on those to whom he has provided communion at home.

A women's self-help group will begin

meeting at the church on Wednesday afternoons. First Baptist will continue to host the two other self-help groups currently using the building.

Mac noted that the book discussion sessions held on "Heaven Is For Real" were well-attended. He plans to hold another session for those who were unable to attend either of those meetings.

In an annual item of business, the Board authorized the Treasurer, Mike Wilson, to sign financial agreements on behalf of the church, including matters pertaining to the Pastor's remuneration. The motion, passed unanimously, was made by Judy Mickanis and seconded by Lori Wilson.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

- CONCERT: Mac reported that the Laudate Mennonite Ensemble's concert at the church on November 30 was a wonderful occasion. They are a top notch choir and were very easy to work with. The largest part of the congregation were local Plain People, and it was nice to establish even that minimal connection to our cousins in the free church tradition. We have contacted the choir to let them know that we'd be very happy to host them again. The next opportunity, if they maintain their custom, would be two years hence.

- VISITORS: Property will carry out the making and installing of additional signs intended to help visitors find rest rooms, nursery, etc. To make all feel truly welcome, Sally stressed the importance of greeting visitors and members, and learning names of fellow worshippers.

- NOMINATING COMMITTEE: Committee members Jan Rolecki, Diane Meixell, and Jack Pyper, have been working on a slate of nominees for election in January. Those who have agreed to stand for 3-year terms are: Cathy Platusich (who will step down from her current position as Christian Education chair) - Property; Dennis Loreman - Worship; Anna Barrick - Church School. With current Discipleship chair Jack Pyper's decision to step down, Curt Smith has agreed to be nominated for the remaining 2-yr unexpired term. At present, a vacancy still exists for Cathy Platusich's unexpired term as Deacon for Christian Education.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

MISSIONS - Jan reported that the committee met recently to review funding for the coming year, and made a reduction of \$2,300 necessary to meet the budgeted allotment. A fundraising event will be held in the spring, with proceeds to go to Food Among Trees, a program to promote sustainable food production methods in Kenya.

CHURCH SCHOOL - Lori reminded the Board of the Christmas Pageant on December 18, noting that Karen Roessler and Lisa Scott have worked

hard on it . Their dedication is greatly appreciated, and all are encouraged to attend. Recently, the Church School made Advent wreaths as a joint activity with the Christian Education committee.

Twelve wreaths were made, with 28 people participating. Also, there was a video night for the kids on Friday, December 9th.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION - Cathy reported a very successful turnout for the first "Women's Night Out," with plans to repeat the event sometime in the second semester at another site. Mac led two book discussion groups on "Heaven is for Real," and all were surprised by how many had read it on a Kindle. Christian Education and the Church School organized a "build it yourself" advent wreath workshop, with the wreaths turning out really well. The committee plans to hold the event again next year, with hopes of involving even more people. Cathy also reminded the group that the Women's Luncheon has been rescheduled for January 10 at Ridgecrest.

FELLOWSHIP - The Fellowship committee, with LOTS of help, offered a cookie and punch reception for the concert goers after a really wonderful performance by the Laudate Mennonite Ensemble on November 30. Thanks to everyone who brought cookies for the reception and special thanks to Kathy Morris and Sally Nyquist for helping with set up and clean up. Echoing the Pastor's positive reaction to the concert, Joyce remarked that those who did not attend the concert missed some really great music and the opportunity to meet some very nice people.

WORSHIP - A reprinted edition of collected Christmas memories will be made available, beginning Sunday. The Deacons also relayed thanks to Alan and Martha Barrick for decorating the church for the Advent and Christmas season.

WATCHCARE - Diane expressed special appreciation to Sallie Pyper and Sally Nyquist for their assistance with the funeral luncheons following the services for Kitty Bowe and Richard Budd. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Lucie Rivoire Knauer, Sec.

Choir Night

Wednesday, January 4, at 7:15 p.m.

Youth Choir

Sunday after Worship starting January 8.

Property Committee

Monday, January 9, at 7:00 p.m.

Annual Congregational Meeting

Following worship Sunday, January 15.

Consider attending this important meeting of the church and what your role in the life of the church will be in 2012. Acceptance of reports, election of Church Officers and Deacons and adoption of a budget will be the business of the day.

Discussion Group

Sunday, January 8, at 7 p.m. in the Library.

Women's Luncheon

Tuesday, January 10, 2012 at Ridgecrest Restaurant. Sign-up on back bulletin board or call the office. All women are invited to attend. Your Love Gift Offering will be accepted there.

Finance Committee

Monday, January 16 at 7:00 p.m.

Women's Bible Study

Will resume Tuesday, January 17, at 10 a.m. All women are welcome.

Board of Deacons' Meeting

Wednesday, January 18, at 7:00 p.m.

Men's Breakfast

Thursday, January 26, at 7:30 a.m. at Ard's

Wesley Forest Ecumenical Winter Retreat

January 20-22, brochure in the office.

NEWS FROM CHILDREN & YOUTH

Pageant December 18, The Circle of Love

Based on John 3:16, included the following
Baby Jesus: Peyton Davenport; Mary: Elena Barrick; Joseph: Matheu Davenport; Manger animals: Veronica & Quinn Stanford; Angels: Lexi Barrick, Izzy DeVett, Angela Lopez, Kaley Palmer, Gabby Rojo, & Madison VanBuskirk
Shepherds: Sammy & Will Barrick, Will DeVett, Nathaniel Lopez, and Mitchell VanBuskirk
Kings: Hobie Beauseigneur, Jamaica Rojo, & James Scott
Readers: Hobie Beauseigneur, Kara Libby, & Sam Scott; Assistants: Liza & Christine Craddock & Agatha & Lydia Hall.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Dr. Nicole Loyd who is now the Vice President of Students Affairs at Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pa.

Thank you's

Thank you to Judy Mickanis, Diane Meixell, Gib & Barb Loyd, Alan & Martha Barrick and Jack Pyper for decorating the church for Christmas.

Thank you to Nikki Loyd who compiled the new "A collection of First Baptist Church Christmas Memories" Stories and pictures from 1997 and 2011. Copies are available at the church.

Thank you to Karen Roessler and Lisa Scott for the Christmas Pageant; and Judy Mickanis and Ruth Blankenship for the Luncheon and Program.

Thank you for your thoughts and prayers during my recent hospitalization, they were very much appreciated. Lynda Blankenship Barrett

All of us whom the church employs are deeply grateful for the kind and generous Christmas gifts we received from First Baptist Church.

Sincerely: Harry, Lloyd, Mac, Ruth & Mary Ellen

Memorial

Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of Herman W. Howard, Jr. who passed away December 20. The funeral is Friday, December 23 at FBC.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of Richard Budd who passed away November 23. A Memorial Service was held at FBC, December 6.

Our thought and prayers are with the family and friends of Lori Wilson's father, Frederick Mercer, who passed away December 21.

For Your Prayer

The Rev. Gordon Kurtz at Maitland Manor, 290 South Street Goderich, ON, Canada N7A 4G6. Phone: 226-421-2267

Ben Austin, Lynda Blankenship Barrett, Peg Budd, Tamara Gerasimova, Russ Mayberry, and Steve Rotolo are at home.

Bill Bobb at Riverview Manor. Chet & Margaret Jump at RidgeCrest. Beverly Fisher at RiverWoods. Cookie Goodall & Harriet Littell at Elmcroft. Gloria Miller at Rockwell.

Matt Doane's Birthday

Matt Doane's birthday is January 20. A card or note would be very encouraging. His address is Matthew Doane, #HK 5637; SCI Dallas; 1000 Follies Road, Drawer K; Dallas, PA 18612

SOMETHING TO CONSIDER

Instructions about your funeral service or memorial service, such as music, songs, readings or other specific requests can be made. We will keep these requests on file in the church office.

FIVE WISHES LIVING WILLS, and INSTRUCTION ABOUT FUNERAL and MEMORIAL SERVICES

Copies of "Five Wishes" the first living will that talks about your personal, emotional, spiritual and medical wishes are available in the office.

About the Five Wishes: Wishes 1 and 2 are both legal documents. Once signed, they meet the legal requirements for an advance directive in PA. Wishes 3, 4 and 5 address matters of comfort care, spirituality, forgiveness, and final wishes.

Wish 1: The Person I Want to Make Care Decisions for Me When I Can't: an assignment of a health care agent. This person makes medical decisions on your behalf if you are unable to speak for yourself.

Wish 2: The Kind of Medical Treatment I Want or Don't Want: a living will--a definition of what life support treatment means to you, and when you would and would not want it.

Wish 3: How Comfortable I Want to Be: addresses matters of comfort care--what type of pain management you would like, personal

grooming and bathing instructions, and whether you would like to know about options for hospice care, among others.

Wish 4: How I Want People to Treat Me: speaks to personal matters, such as whether you would like to be at home, whether you would like someone to pray at your bedside, among others.

Wish 5: What I Want My Loved Ones to Know: deals with matters of forgiveness, how you wish to be remembered and final wishes regarding funeral or memorial plans.

Holiday Poinsettias

The poinsettias decorating the church for the season, which may be taken home after services Christmas Eve, have been given by: Jan Rolecki, Gayle & Bill Pepper, Audrey & Art Borden, The Barrick Family, The Wilson Family, Sallie & Jack Pyper, and In Memory of Jessie Soars; In Memory of Denny Bowers; In Memory of Don Foreman; In Memory of Mike Lucas; In Memory of Assunda Rotolo; In Memory of Earl Maxfield; In Memory of Lillian Sones; In Memory of Harry Rose by the family; In Memory of Bud & Helen Ranck by the family; In Memory of Kay Nesbit by Barb & Gib Loyd; In Memory of Donald & Elsie Young, Rev. Andrew & Margaret Young, Percy & Ruth Wilson by Cathy, Don & Peg Young; In Memory of Rev. Jesse Blankenship by the family; In Honor & Memory of loved ones by Betsy Henkelman; In Memory of Fay, Ted & Ron Morris by the family; In Honor of Frank & Violet Dietrich by the Morris family; In Honor & Memory of family by Mimi Dow; In Memory of John Zeller by the family; In Memory of Peg Bryan & Mary Jane Stevenson by the Zeller family; In Honor of lost Family by the Rojo-Ash family; In Honor of our angel babies by the Rojo-Ash family; In Memory of loved ones by the Meixell family; In Memory of John & Sarah Mauger & H. Elmer Warner By Paul & Pam Mauger; In Memory of Herman W. Howard III by the Howard family; In Memory of Roger Libby & Suzanne Meixell by the Spangler/Libby family; In Memory of Robert J. Rapp, Sr. and in Honor of Audrey & Art Borden by the Rapp Family; In Memory of Paul Rowe, Mary Scott & Margaret MacKenzie by the Scott family; In Memory of David H. Hall by the Hall Family ; In Memory of loved ones by the Pangburn family; In Memory of Bud & Helen Ranck, Pete Pedrick, Roger Libby and John Zeller by Jeff Ranck.

Film about Peace Efforts in the Middle East

St. John's U.C.C., Lewisburg will be showing a documentary entitled "*Little Town of Bethlehem*". Faces the struggle for a nonviolent solution to the crisis in the Middle East. Come and be inspired by this story, on January 22 at 7 p.m.