

Dialogue

First Baptist Church of Lewisburg
51 South Third Street
Lewisburg, PA 17837
Volume XLVI, Number 1
January 2010

free to think, bound to serve

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From the Pastor:

Nutritionists and dietitians have professional organizations, and often are in the employ of healthcare agencies or the state, so public service is part of their work. I am sure that is the reason that the newspapers leading up to Thanksgiving have articles in them about not overeating at Thanksgiving, and the newspapers leading up to Christmas have articles in them about sensible eating at the holidays. These people, charged with improving the nutritional habits of their fellow citizens, have recognized that lifelong changes elude most, and have hit on the looming promise of public feasts as a time to add their voice of reason about healthful dining.

Our problem is that we feast all the time. Calorie intake which would only have accompanied some great festival in the ancient world is a daily occurrence for many. People have stretched their capacity, and that permits excess at the groaning boards of Yuletide, but the holidays are not the problem. Our ancestors ate more recklessly when they had the money and had the chance, courses and courses at great occasions, but most of them led more vigorous lives and carried trimmer frames than we do. Their secret was in feasting at the holidays, and maybe even every Sunday, and eating modestly most of the time.

It seems silly to imagine persons cutting back a little here and there at Christmas, passing up real butter and making do with rice cakes instead of fruitcake, feeling guilty about cookies. If people didn't overeat all the time, and if they weren't brainwashed into considering the holidays as catastrophically caloric, they'd enjoy the luxury of a feast, feel strangely replete, recover and be grateful. One day's sybaritic excess--unless one chokes on the food or has a serious allergy--doesn't do one in.

I can sympathize with those whose conscience drives them to lecture us through the press about healthful alternatives. They know that people are squandering their health, and shortening their lives, by gluttony. A lifetime of being voices crying in the wilderness, perhaps only really getting a motivated person in their hands when there's been a heart attack or a diagnosis of diabetes, has made them hope for some teachable moment, some hour in which the public's stone ear might hearken to the message of moderation. The holidays seem like a good time, because

everyone's thinking about eating, anyway.

It's like the religion business. In matters of the spirit it's not the one mistake which changes one's life forever-- there's forgiveness and redemption for any, and for all. The rare instance of regrettable choosing doesn't blight people's lives, if they accept the chance for new life which God always gives. No; it's the daily habits of selfishness and pride which squander the potential of souls. It's offhand presumption and reflex ingratitude, ingrained self-pity and routine faithlessness which stunt the lives of those created to be children of God.

Some approaches to Christianity seek to create a crisis by preaching hellfire and damnation, and then opening the door to professions of conversion. Repentant sinners are assured that they've finally found the Lord, or been found, and the business starts over of seeking to save someone else.

Other churches count on Christmas and Easter, the great anchoring holidays of the faith, to repeat their proclamation of God With Us, or Death Defeated. The holidays have their own weight, and get their own attention, and so seem to provide an opening. People are assured of God's love, and go home.

But what about regular time? What happens to the person who decided to accept Jesus after the stirring sermon, or the person who resolved to be more faithful after keeping the holiday? How is the force of habit defied, and unaccustomed Christianity worked into the fabric of life? A man once wrote that "the only hope of the world is universal reformation, and every man ought to be ambitious of being the first." This is the difficult task for every moment, for all of life which stands apart from special days and seasons. If we can approach our faith that way, then the holidays, rather than being calls to extra effort, can be gracious respite from the rigors of discipleship, and reminders of what God has done to make possible our

Peace.

Mac



BOARD OF DEACONS

The monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons was held at 7:30 p.m. on December 9, 2009, at First Baptist Church, with Moderator Joel Turrell presiding. Also present were Pastor Mac Scott, Treasurer - Mike Wilson, Financial Secretary - Judy Mickanis, Recording Secretary - Lucie Rivoire, and committee representatives as follows: Worship - Kathy Morris; Property - Bob Murcek; Watchcare - Anne Murcek; Children's Ministries - Lori Wilson; Finance - Jack Pyper; Discipleship - Curt Smith.

Opening devotions included singing of the hymn, "There's a Song in the Air," followed by reflections on the meaning of "Emmanuel, God with Us."

CARING FOR OUR CONGREGATION:

The Pastor reported on recent hospitalizations and recuperations within the congregation. He commented that various individuals have given their time where special help was needed, and he reminded the group that First Baptist's role as host to various self-help groups reaches out to many in the community.

WATCHCARE: Anne noted that meals are being provided to several individuals and families coping with medical treatments.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES - Lori Wilson reported that the committee met in November. Nine children attended the recent video night. The committee thanks Lisa Scott and Anna Barrick for their assistance with that event. In preparation for the Christmas pageant on December 20, a rehearsal and pizza party for the participants will be held following worship on December 13. Sunday School classes will not be held on December 27.

FULFILLING OUR ROLE AS THE BODY OF CHRIST:

MISSIONS - Finance committee chair Jack Pyper noted that the increased size of the church's endowment fund will allow for more generous payments in 2010 to some of the entities supported by the Mission Committee's benevolence budget.

WORSHIP - Kathy reminded the Board that no action had been taken on a subject discussed at a prior meeting: namely, a request by some members that communion be served more frequently than the nine occasions per year presently on the calendar (first Sunday of alternate months, plus Maundy Thursday, Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve). The Board agreed to cover the "off" months by holding a brief observance in a small group setting outside of the sanctuary, immediately preceding the full worship service for the designated Sunday. The practice would begin in March, on an experimental basis. A motion to this effect was made by Judy Mickanis, seconded

by Jack Pyper, and approved unanimously.

DISCIPLESHIP - Curt reported that visitor numbers have tapered a bit, a trend typical for this time of year. The committee recently mailed postcards with a seasonal message of friendship to visitors, shut-ins and others. Curt noted that the church website will be updated shortly to include a new set of photos. The group informally discussed the merits of various forms of media advertising.

The Board joined in acknowledging the Barrick family for decorating the sanctuary with Christmas greens.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE has succeeded in finding nominees for all but a few of the positions open. The full slate will be published in the annual report and presented at January's annual meeting for approval by the congregation.

FULFILLING OUR ROLE AS STEWARDS OF GIFTS:

TREASURER - Mike reported that income and expenditures remain on target for this time of year.

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: Judy reported that subscriptions received to date total \$93,592.52, and plate offerings stand at \$6,163.04.

PROPERTY - Bob called attention to the new backlight installed in the choir loft. The large stained glass window at the rear of the church is now well displayed after dark.

AUDIT - The Board adopted written audit procedures as researched and proposed by Lori Wilson. A motion by Mike Wilson, seconded by Jack Pyper, was passed unanimously to approve the policies.

In an item of annual business, the Board authorized Treasurer Mike Wilson to sign financial documents on behalf of the church. A motion to this effect by Jack Pyper, seconded by Judy Mickanis, was passed unanimously.

Closing with a prayer, the Deacons adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lucie Rivoire, Secretary



HAPPY BIRTHDAY FBC

The First Baptist Church of Lewisburg was organized **January 3, 1844**, which makes it 166 year old. Happy Birthday First Baptist Lewisburg!

January 3, Epiphany Sunday

Wise men still seek him!



Women's Bible Study

The Women's Bible Study will resume meeting Tuesday, **January 5, 2009**. All Women are welcome to join them at 9:45 Tuesday mornings in the Library



Choir Night will rehearse **Wednesday, January 6**, at 7:15 p.m.



Annual Congregational Business Meeting

The Annual Congregational Business Meeting will be held **Sunday, January 10**, following Worship. Acceptance of reports, election of church Officers and Deacons and adoption of a budget. Every member should plan on attending.

Discussion Group

The Discussion Group will be Sundays evening at 7 in the Library on January 10 and 24. Copies of the article to be discussed are on the desk in the Library.



The Board of Deacons will meet Wednesday, January 13, at 7:30 p.m. in the Library.

Discussion Group

The Discussion Group will meet Sunday **January 10 and 24** at 7:00 p.m. in the Library. Copies of the article to be discussed are on the desk in the library.



Our Thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of The Rev. Jesse Blankenship who died Thursday, December 10,

2009 at Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village. The Rev. MacKenzie Scott conducted the service at First Baptist at 6:30 pm, Sunday, December 13. Burial was at the Lewisburg Cemetery.



Ecumenical Winter Retreat

The 38th annual Ecumenical Winter Retreat will be held **January 22-24, 2010** at Wesley Forest in western Union County. The theme will be "In the Light of the Moment". Our leader will be Mary L. Wade, minister, poet, organization founder and world traveler. Mary is a powerful yet warm presence with a wealth of life experience. Your life will be enriched by sharing a weekend with her. A brochure giving further details of the weekend is available at the church office. Don't miss this one! Save the dates now and plan to enjoy this stimulating and enjoyable weekend with friends.

NEWS FROM THE



CHILDREN & YOUTH

Thanks to everyone who helped make the Christmas Pageant Sunday such an enjoyable success. The Children and Youth did a great job with their pageant; with help from the adults. Thank you to everyone who contributed to Toys for the Manger and the Blanket Sunday offering.

Retired Ministers & Missionaries Offering

\$440.00 has been received for this offering. Thank you for your love gift to these retired servants of God.



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

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

Annual Reports

Thank you to everyone who has submitted their annual reports. If you have not submitted your report yet, we need it asap.



February Newsletter

Please have information for the February Newsletter in the office by **January 21**.

Mary Ellen



SOMETHING TO CONSIDER

Instructions about your funeral service or memorial service, such as music, songs, readings or other specific requests can be made using the enclosed form. We will keep it 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 and spiritual needs as well as your 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 (also called proxy, surrogate, representative or health care power of attorney). 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.

Message from

January 17, 2010 is Christian Unity Sunday. In this age of diversity, we have the opportunity to breathe new life back into the message of God found in the Bible and revitalized its potency for our world. We need to be set free from narrow and sometimes oppressive ways of interpreting the Scriptures and be challenged to embrace a multicultural approach. All people need to hear their own stories in the Bible and gain appreciation for the stories of others. I believe that faith in the twenty-first century depends on our ability to embrace the multicultural messages of the Bible. That message, in short, calls us to come together as the people of God despite our differences. (Taken from "Coming Together in the 21st Century: The Bible's Message in an Age of Diversity" by Curtiss Paul DeYoung, available at Judson Press.)



The Blankenship family wishes to thank all of our church members and friends who have given us a special support system during the time of illness, recuperation and bereavement through your love, prayers, visits, phone calls, delicious foods, cards, flowers, kind words and thoughtfulness in remembrance of our loved one, Jesse Blankenship III.
Sincerely in Christ's Love, Ruth Blankenship.

THE REAL TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

I heard this song, sung to the tune of "The 12 days of Christmas", hope you enjoy it.

On the twelfth day of Christmas,
JESUS gave to me, Eternity that's free
A thousand songs to sing, (11th)
Streets of pure gold, (10th)
Mansions above, (9th)
A Robe and A Crown, (8th)
A Body Glorified, (7th)
Power from on high, (6th)
Joy for my soul, (5th)
Love for all men, (4th)
Peace in my heart, (3rd)
Everlasting life, (2nd)
and Salvation full and free! (1st)