

## Dialogue

First Baptist Church of Lewisburg  
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Lewisburg, PA 17837  
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### From the Pastor

In the movie "King Kong" the Skull Island residents tether a beautiful young woman outside the village wall, and Kong comes and takes her away, his potential for troubling the villagers satisfied. This type of transaction is so familiar to us from the history of religion that we don't think hard about its logic. As a result we confuse propitiation, in which a deity's destructive desire is given a focus by providing a victim, with sacrifice, in which something of great value to a worshiper is forgone as a gesture of regard for God.

Until the Americans arrive at Skull Island with Fay Wray, propitiation and sacrifice are combined. Some attractive daughter of the village is offered up, depriving a family of a daughter and some young swain a bride, and in a sense she costs the whole community something. They are sacrificing her continued role in their lives as a living person, because their "god" Kong requires her.

He has something like a Beauty and the Beast script in mind, but we have no idea how this has worked out for his earlier offerings. We infer that those women were destroyed, deliberately or inadvertently, and so they have ended up taking on themselves the monster's murderous possibilities, and so shielding their village. Up to this point it's easy to regard sacrifice and propitiation as one thing.

When Fay Wray, however, falls into the hands of the local population, she costs them nothing. She's nobody's daughter, nobody's sister, nobody's love. It is because she is not precious to them that she is offered to Kong. They think he'll like her, and he does. But it is no longer a sacrifice for the village.

There is no sacrifice. Fay Wray doesn't offer herself. She's just a victim of the village's desire to buy off Kong without spending its own maidens. If there were a necessary connection between sacrifice and propitiation, it's been violated.

Old Testament religion, the sacrificial practices of which influence the New Testament's musings on the meaning of Christ, sometimes seems more a matter of renouncing something valuable and other times more of substituting a victim for punishment. It may be useful to keep the two things separate in our minds, in order, at least, to clarify what the Bible may be intuiting about its own dealings with God.

Substitutionary propitiation (I think atonement's the wrong word, because for what is

*free to think, bound to serve*

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Abraham making amends by offering Isaac?) is a big theme in Judaism. God seems to need blood spilled, to balance out the conflicting forces and claims extent in the spiritual commerce between heaven and earth. Victimhood originally is destined for one party--Abraham's son, or the firstborn of the Israelites captive in Egypt--and God intervenes and provides another victim, buying the life of the proposed victims at the same time as satisfying whatever is accomplished by death.

The substitutes, however, in order to serve, must be precious themselves, and that's when they become sacrifices. They are the first fruits of the farm, they are animals without blemish, they are the best. By giving them into the hands of the priests the worshiper doesn't only provide really good food to the priesthood--who ritually consume what's left after God has appreciated God's share. The worshiper shows good faith. The worshiper demonstrates a preference for God to have what's desirable, rather than keeping the desirable for himself or herself.

The focus, then, isn't on the thing consumed. It's easier to see this with an offering of a loaf of bread, since that doesn't involve blood or what we consider taking life. Putting the best loaf of bread on the altar is an act of devotion in proportion to the devotee's hunger for the bread. The sacrifice is not what ceases to exist, it's in letting something cease to exist for one in order that the thing be dedicated to God.

Human lives are spared in the story of Isaac and the story of the Passover. Animals, in both cases, perish instead. They are animals which have been in the possession of those arranging the offering, however briefly in Abraham's case, and so they are sacrifices in that sense. They cost people something, but less than the people otherwise would have paid.

When the New Testament seeks to comprehend Christ and his crucifixion and his resurrection in traditional terms, it tries it this way. Jesus offers himself up to God, and so his life is a sacrifice because he forgoes it; or God sends his Son, so God is sacrificing the thing most important to God. What is being propitiated is mysterious, but it seems to me more likely death than the need for justice. The paschal lamb is not a scapegoat, but a victim to divert death from human victims. Perhaps the assumption that death is the due payment for sin is the reason the cross is portrayed not as a decoy but as propitiation. 2 Corinthians 5:

21 says that God "made him to be sin who knew no sin" in order that we might become the righteousness of God. Paul has transformed Christ's innocence--part of the perfection which makes offerings a sacrifice--into imputed wickedness, like the guilt imposed on a scapegoat--and made the benefit, not death's being diverted and our living beyond expected limits--but our being renewed in terms of righteousness. That suits Paul's purpose in encouraging the Corinthians to justify Christ's deed by behaving better, but it departs from the pattern set by Abraham and Isaac and by the Passover. It could be argued that the best way to read Good Friday as a sacrifice would be to see it either as Jesus giving up his future for his friends, as the gospels and Paul sometimes conceive it, or as God giving up God's favorite person in order to get something better to happen on behalf of others. The "giving up" is the sacrifice.

What's being satisfied in either case? The unjust human sentence is owed nothing, but Jesus' own sense of his role as God's servant makes him sacrifice himself. It's harder to say that God needs to offer something to death in order to undo death's power, because that makes death seem too equal in power to the Almighty. It is also hard to say that the point of Jesus' crucifixion is spiritual cleansing, when the immediate discovered benefit is restoration from death, and while spiritual acceptability before God remains, not our experience, but something reckoned to us by faith, or otherwise imputed to us by God's sending Christ. It is as much Bethlehem's manger as Calvary's cross which remakes humanity, as much the incarnation as a life consumed. In fact, it is Jesus' obedience to death, as Paul puts it, which completes his being the prototype, as the "new man" or "second Adam," for who it is that we discover ourselves to be--not children of wrath, but of

Peace. Mac

#### **BOARD OF DEACONS' MEETING -**

The monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons was held at 6:30 p.m. on June 17, 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: Finance - Jack Pyper; Worship - Kathy Morris; Property - Bob Murcek; Watchcare - Anne Murcek; Fellowship - Joyce Wilson; Discipleship - Curt Smith.

The Pastor reported on delivery of communion to various home-bound members.

**WATCHCARE** - Anne expressed thanks

to all who assisted with the reception following the memorial service for Doris Wilson.

**CHILDREN & YOUTH**- Lori sent a report of recent and upcoming activities. Children's Day was held on May 31st, involving many children and youth. After the service, a group of all ages went to Vennari's for pizza. Lisa Scott took a small group of older youth to Reba & Pancho's for lunch, since it is one of their favorite activities.

**FELLOWSHIP** - Father's Day will be observed on **June 21**.

**MISSIONS** - Todd sent a message thanking all who contributed to or helped with the June 13 yard sale. The event raised more than \$600 for two worthy projects.

**WORSHIP** - Kathy reported that participation has improved, with more individuals signing up for worship service responsibilities.

**DISCIPLESHIP** - Curt reported that the church has been maintaining good visitor volume and retention. He shared a printed version of the proposed website for the church, accepting input on both content and design.

**PROPERTY** - Bob noted that the committee is still attempting to find an affordable solution to problems with the back door of the church. Efforts are also underway to develop written procedures for closing the building after use by outside groups.

**FINANCIAL SECRETARY** - Judy reported that subscriptions to date total \$48,272.86, while plate offerings amount to \$3,480.70.

**TREASURER** - Mike explained to the Board that, because of the need to make some payments by credit card, he has set up a separate checking account which will be tied to a debit card. He will maintain only a modest balance in this account, to guard against losses through improper access.

Minutes of the May 20 meeting were approved as published. A draft version of the 2009-2010 church calendar was distributed for review and input; a final version is to be adopted at the August meeting.

Closing with a prayer, the Deacons adjourned the meeting at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lucie Rivoire, Secretary




**Quarterly Business Meeting**  
**Sunday, July 12th**, the Quarterly  
Congregational Meeting will be held after Worship.

**American Red Cross Blood Drive**  
**Friday, July 17th** from 10-4 there will be a blood drive at Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village in the Community Building. 524-0400 for appointment.



**One Great Hour of Sharing**

The One Great Hour of Sharing Offering totaled \$1107.00.

**Sunday, August 2nd,**  at 10:00 a.m. Beaver Memorial United Methodist Church will join us here at First Baptist Church for Communion and Worship.



**Board of Deacons' Meeting**

The Board of Deacons will meet **Wednesday, August 19th** at 6:30 p.m. in the Library. There will not be a July meeting.



June 7th we welcomed Mike and Amy Lucas into membership at FBC. Mike and Amy come to us from Grace United Methodist Church in Millersburg.

**NEWS FROM THE**

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH**



Camp E.D.G.E. has finished and the children experienced and discovered God everywhere. Their mission project was the Clothes Sharing Program which is part of the Eastern Union County Supplemental Food Program. They collected new kids' socks, gently used kids' books and toys.



**Alderson-Broadus/ABMPAD Golf Scramble**

The annual Alderson-Broadus College/ American Baptist Men of Pennsylvania and Delaware Golf Scramble will be held **Friday, July 31st**, at the Cumberland Golf Club in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. For more information or to arrange a tee time as a foursome or as an individual, call Judith Barnard at (304)457-6321 or e-mail her at barnardjh@ab.edu.

**Evangelical Hospice Volunteer training program for new volunteers.**  
**Hospice Volunteers are "Filling lives with hope and hearts with joy"**

Evangelical Hospice needs caring volunteers to help them continue providing comprehensive services to their terminally ill patients and their families. Volunteers are an essential part of Hospice services and working with the program can offer you a unique opportunity to give of yourself and help others in a time of great need. Hospice volunteers visit with patients and their families, provide bereavement services, assist in the office, etc. Volunteers need to be 18 or older, they do not need to have experience in health care.

To prepare for the seminar, **advanced registration is required, contact Terry L. Stahley, at 522-2955 before September.** Training will be September 14th through 16th at Evangelical Home Health Services.



Our thoughts and prayers are with the family of Mary Kathryn Brouse who passed Friday, June 19th. Her funeral was Monday, June 22 with Rev. MacKenzie Scott officiating.



Jesse Blankenship wishes to sincerely thank everyone for their cards, notes, flowers, visits and especially prayers on his behalf for continued recovery and rehab. Ruth also appreciates the support of the church family during our time of crisis, thank you!

**The office will be closed Friday July 3rd for JULY 4th, INDEPENDENCE DAY**



**Parades, Hot Dogs, Fireworks and most important, giving thanks for our Forefathers, for their vision in forming these United States of America and for the freedom we enjoy.**

## School is Starting for

Belinda Rotolo in July at McCann School of Business and Technology . She will be taking the Office Technology/Medical course. We pray God's blessings upon Belinda in this endeavor.



## September Newsletter

Please have information for the September Newsletter in the office by **August 20th**.

Summer has arrived, take time to smell the flowers; enjoy the fresh vegetables the local farmers grow; sit and enjoy a sunrise or sunset.

**Remember to check the sign-up sheets on the back bulletin board.**

**Thank you** for all your prayers for my brother, Robert Heidel, he is now home and doing well. The past few weeks I have seen many answered prayers and miracles. I am grateful for your kind words and most of all for your prayers.

*Mary Ellen*

## Some e-mails received at the Church office.



Give me a sense of humor, Lord,  
Give me the grace to see a joke,  
To get some humor out of life,  
And pass it on to other folk.

### **For those who speed on the highway a few hymns:**

45 mph---God Will Take Care of You



65 mph---Nearer My God To Thee  
85 mph---This World Is Not My Home



95 mph---Lord, I'm Coming Home  
100 mph---Precious Memories

### **EXPLANATION OF GOD:**

This was written by an 8-year-old named Danny Burton, who lives in Chula Vista, CA . He wrote it for his third grade homework assignment, to explain God. I wonder if any of us could have done as well.

One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die, so there will be enough people to take care of things on earth. He doesn't make grownups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way he doesn't have to take up his valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.'

God's second most important job is

listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times beside bedtime. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV because of this. Because he hears everything, there must be a terrible lot of noise in his ears, unless he has thought of a way to turn it off.'

God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere which keeps Him pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting his time by going over your mom and dad's head asking for something they said you couldn't have.'

Atheists are people who don't believe in God. I don't think there are any in Chula Vista . At least there aren't any who come to our church.'

Jesus is God's Son. He used to do all the hard work, like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach the people who didn't want to learn about God. They finally got tired of him preaching to them and they crucified him but he was good and kind, like his father, and he told his father that they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said O.K.'

His dad (God) appreciated everything that he had done and all his hard work on earth so he told him he didn't have to go out on the road anymore. He could stay in heaven. So he did. And now he helps his dad out by listening to prayers and seeing things which are important for God to take care of and which ones he can take care of himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary, only more important.'

You can pray anytime you want and they are sure to help you because they got it worked out so one of them is on duty all the time.'

You should always go to church on Sunday because it makes God happy, and if there's anybody you want to make happy, it's God! Don't skip church to do something you think will be more fun like going to the beach. This is wrong. And besides the sun doesn't come out at the beach until noon anyway.'

If you don't believe in God, besides being an atheist, you will be very lonely, because your parents can't go everywhere with you, like to camp, but God can. It is good to know He's around you when you're scared, in the dark or when you can't swim and you get thrown into real deep water by big kids.'

But...you shouldn't just always think of what God can do for you. I figure God put me here and he can take me back anytime he pleases.

And...that's why I believe in God.'