

Dialogue

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

The Jews of Jesus' day attempted to build a trustworthy arena for the ancestral religion in the presence of a collaborationist government and a corrupted Temple. They did this by emphasizing synagogue teaching and personal piety, both within reach of many of the population as ways to practice Judaism apart from suspect structures or leadership.

One problem with this solution was that there were lots of Jews whose material or cultural poverty prevented them from being part of it. Those who had barely enough when working all the time probably neither could read nor easily follow teaching from scripture, and not give the time and energy to synagogue attendance. Whether they could afford to have garments always in accord with Levitical law or maintain the ritual purifications--presuming they knew them--or observe the dietary niceties of their faith is doubtful. Whatever liabilities they always had possessed with regard to the old sacrificial cult--had they made pilgrimages and offered sacrifices when the Temple had respect?--were magnified by the focus on individual effort.

A certain amount of affluence and leisure were required to be spiritually healthy in Jesus' time. That's one of the things against which Jesus worked. He decried the judgmentalism and hypocrisy of those who had developed a form of religion which didn't fit their poorer brothers and sisters.

We twenty-first century Americans have a similar problem with regard to our physical health, and await a Jesus to teach us how to evade illness even when we are materially or culturally poor. We live in a society in which steady physical exercise, a healthful diet, and routine medical attention are largely in the province of the prosperous. If a person follows the diet offered by Dr. Dean Ornish for heart disease, for example, he or she soon is spending a disproportionate amount of time and money acquiring foods from health food stores and preparing them.

Compared with their more comfortable neighbors, the poor tend to be more sedentary, more obese, have higher blood pressure, and more often suffer from forms of mental illness related to situational depression and low self-regard. The religion of health which competes for America's interest with the religion of a relationship with God tends to perpetuate an approach to physical well being which involves money and

free to think, bound to serve

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leisure. It involves wealth because health care has been one of the few segments of the economy generating increasing pay for persons working in it. Our approach to keeping well requires leisure because health is no longer offered by attendance at the Temple, at festivals--routine doctor's visits and hospital tests--but by constant, self-motivated efforts such as self-exams, home exercises learned from therapists, and good habits like the time-consuming diet of fresher and home-prepared foods.

Worthy efforts like low-cost clinics and making health insurance more available are not the whole solution. Education seems promising--Jesus, was, after all, hailed as Teacher among other things--but what would be the content of the lessons? In the gospel Jesus' message makes a difference in the lives of "the people of the land"--his poor neighbors--in part because he tells them they already have the nucleus of a healthy religion within themselves, and those who look down on them are less spiritually fit than they presume. What would be the equivalent in terms of physical health now? What advantage might the ordinary person possess? Is it possible that physical health today isn't quite what we think it is?

These are and will continue to be questions of public policy and medical ethics. Finding a way to encourage the needy to be less vulnerable, as measured medically, also remains one of the missions of the church. Before Jesus made much headway as a teacher, he won attention as a Healer.

Peace, Mac

Congregational Meeting

The annual business meeting of the congregation was held following worship on January 15, 2012, with about 25 members in attendance and Moderator Sally Nyquist presiding. Copies of the church's 2011 annual report were provided to all. Following an opening prayer, minutes of the October congregational meeting were approved as published, following a motion by Judy Mickanis and seconded by Lori Wilson.

ANNUAL REPORT: Reserving action on the reports of the Nominating and Finance Committees for later action, the congregation voted to approve all remaining sections of the Annual Report, acting on a motion to that effect by Judy Mickanis, seconded by Judy Ellis, and incorporating corrections and comments as follows.

- p. 1: change heading to show the year 2011; change Property Committee personnel by replacing Alex Ororbia with Bill Pepper - pp. 4-5: Moderator encouraged the congregation at large to take up the challenge of learning everyone's name. She also noted that a report from the committee on Church Growth and Vitality should be forthcoming. - p. 8: Music Director reminded the group that tapes and occasionally CDs of the worship service are available for those unable to attend or who wish another chance to hear the service.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE: Speaking for the committee, Diane Meixell thanked those who agreed to be nominated for office, as well as those who served on the Board throughout the past year. She then reviewed the list of names printed on page 11 of the annual report and asked for any additional nominations from the floor. As shown in the report, the committee was unable to find a nominee to fill the unexpired term as head of Christian Education. Until that position is filled, the Board will act as a committee of the whole to address this committee's responsibilities. A motion by Judy Mickanis, seconded by Lori Wilson, to accept the entire slate as published was approved unanimously. Changes in personnel are reflected as shown below.

CHURCH SCHOOL (3 year term): Anna Barrick
- WORSHIP (3 year term): Dennis Loreman
- PROPERTY (3 year term): Cathy Platusich
- DISCIPLESHIP (2 year term): Curt Smith, completing the unexpired term of Jack Pyper, who has resigned the position
- CHRISTIAN EDUCATION (2 year term): no candidate. The vacancy represents the unexpired term of Cathy Platusich, who has agreed to serve a full 3-year term as chair of Property.

- Re-elected to one-year terms are:
MODERATOR - Sally Nyquist; RECORDING SECRETARY - Lucie Rivoire Knauer;
TREASURER - Mike Wilson; FINANCIAL SECRETARY - Judy Mickanis.

TREASURER'S REPORT: In reviewing financial activity for the year 2011, Treasurer Mike Wilson commented that he has switched the bookkeeping from paper to computer, allowing some differences in presentation. He noted that most expenditures were on target or slightly below the amount budgeted. Certain exceptions, such as Church School (line item 3), reflect expenditures that had not yet been assigned in the budgeting process. Subscription revenues totaled almost \$9,000 more than the amount projected. However, Mike cautioned that some generous contributors have passed away within the last year. Plate offerings were only a little more than half of the expected amount. Although expenditures outpaced revenues, the gap was significantly lower

than had been projected, resulting in a larger than expected beginning balance for 2012. Concerning benevolences, Mike remarked that the budget does not reflect various spontaneous donations received for special causes. He will work on a report of these contributions for a future newsletter.

Questions also arose concerning reporting and recording memorial donations. It was noted that the memorial book on display in the tower room has not been kept up to date. Discussion also centered around recognizing major bequests. It was proposed that acknowledging such contributions more prominently might remind and encourage others to consider First Baptist in their estate planning process. On the other hand, the appropriateness of publicizing specific amounts and names was questioned. A motion by Martha Zeller, seconded by Sally Nyquist, was passed, charging the Finance Committee with formulating a policy on memorial donations and bequests.

2012 BUDGET: In light of the higher than expected beginning balance, the Finance Committee may be able to adjust certain items after re-examining the situation in the coming months. Meanwhile, it was agreed that it would be possible to proceed with the examination of the budget as drafted. Mike commented that salaries have been increased by 3%. Missions will be allotted 18% of subscriptions and plate offerings (down from 20% in 2011; about \$2,500 decrease). The proposed budget relies heavily on the beginning balance to offset expenditures, since subscriptions alone are not expected to cover anticipated costs. Moreover, the budget does not cover various major Property projects currently under consideration. Acting on a motion by Bob Murcek and seconded by Judy Mickanis, the congregation approved the proposed budget, with the understanding that the beginning balance will differ from the published figure. The congregation thanked the Treasurer for his hard work and commitment of time throughout the year.

GENERAL DISCUSSION: - It was suggested that the church consider establishing a paid or volunteer position whereby a young adult would work with children in and approaching high school. As most programs are currently supervised by parents from within the congregation, this would offer leadership from someone with a different perspective. - It was agreed that the church should explore ways to reduce computer incompatibility issues that hamper communication between members and the church office.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.
Respectfully submitted, Lucie Rivoire Knauer

Board of Deacons

The monthly meeting of the Board of Deacons was held at 7:00 p.m. on January 18, 2012, at First

Baptist Church, with Moderator Sally Nyquist presiding. Also present were Pastor Mac Scott; Financial Secretary - Judy Mickanis; Recording Secretary - Lucie Rivoire Knauer; Missions - Jan Rolecki; Watchcare - Diane Meixell; Church School - Anna Barrick; Discipleship - Curt Smith.

The Moderator opened with thoughts from readings on Church Growth and Vitality, each one stressing the importance of building relationships within the congregation. A scriptural verse from 1 Timothy interestingly lists "hospitable" as a quality desirable in church leaders. A brief prayer followed.

Minutes of the December meeting were approved as published. The Board agreed to continue meeting on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. This month's meeting was delayed until the third week, to allow for the election of Deacons and officers at the congregational meeting on January 15.

PASTOR'S REPORT: Mac reported on visits to convalescents and those in failing health. Since the last meeting, he took part in three funerals or memorial services: Herman Howard, Jr., Frank Dietrich, and that of Lori Wilson's father, Frederick Mercer. Mac conveyed thanks from those families for various forms of hospitality provided by the church.

Mac summarized highlights of various special occasions in recent and upcoming weeks. He mentioned that in addition to the well-attended Christmas Eve service, the Sunday morning service on Christmas Day drew about thirty participants, with the Murcek family providing music. Mac expressed thanks to The Rev. John Lee for preaching on New Year's Day. Two weeks after that, Mac and several members of First Baptist attended the Martin Luther King commemoration at St. Paul's AME Church in Milton. Efforts will be made to promote that event more prominently to our congregation next year. On February 11, First Baptist will join other churches nationwide in observing "Evolution Sunday." Plans are under-way for the Lenten season, including special evening programs with the Murceks providing a meal.

Discussion of the book, "Heaven Is For Real," proved fruitful and interesting. Due to schedule conflicts among interested participants, Mac offered the program on three different dates. He noted that this resulted in smaller groups and afforded attendees a better opportunity to share their views than would be possible in a larger group.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

- **PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE:** As directed by the Constitution, and with the Board's approval, the Moderator appointed three Deacons to the committee: Curt Smith, Diane Meixell, and Cathy Platusich. Sally noted that the revised

Constitution offers clearer guidelines on making the committee's meeting schedule and purpose known to the congregation at large.

- **GUIDELINES FOR E-MAIL NOTIFICATIONS:** Recognizing that some occasions warrant a general e-mail to be sent to the congregation's electronic mailing list, the Deacons approved guidelines for appropriate subjects. 1-Date, time and place of a funeral service, visitation hours and reception for a member/ friend or member of their family; 2-Special church-sponsored events that are not part of the regular schedule; 3-Notification that all or part of the church building is unavailable, may require re-scheduling of activities; additionally, notification of the church office's closing during scheduled hours. **COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION:** Sally welcomed the new members to the Board, noting that a vacancy remains for the Christian Education committee (adult programs). If no one is found to fill the slot, the Deacons will work as a committee of the whole to address these responsibilities. Sally suggested that other committees consider offering an educational program based on their own area of interest. Committee chairs were asked to review their list of members and submit a list of personnel to be shared among the Deacons and made known to the congregation. Goals for the year should be formulated and presented at next month's meeting of the Deacons.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

FINANCE - Speaking on behalf of the committee, Judy Mickanis explained the committee's attempts to address significant Property expenses not covered by the annual budget. Under current economic conditions, it has become unrealistic to expect subscriptions and plate offerings to meet all of the church's needs, even when supplemented by a portion of the endowment fund's earnings.

The committee feels that the time has come to launch a Capital Campaign to support the Property Committee's efforts. A recent development is the anticipated bequest from the estate of Mary Jane Stevenson, expected to contribute nearly \$60,000 to the church. With this background in mind, Judy made a motion authorizing the Finance Committee to stage a capital campaign in which donations would be matched dollar for dollar by funds from Mary Jane Stevenson's gift. The motion was seconded by Jan Rolecki. Following a thoughtful discussion, the motion was passed unanimously.

DISCIPLESHIP - Curt reported that the committee will continue its program of basic outreach. Recent efforts included an Advent mailing and the placement of a Christmas season advertisement in the newspaper's church section. The committee is exploring other means of publicizing First Baptist through news items. Internally, the committee will

link with the work of the committee on Church Vitality and Growth.

PROPERTY - Cathy sent a reported that a contract has been signed for the removal and replacement of the front steps, sidewalk and brickwork. The committee has consulted an expert concerning the clock. In addition to timekeeping problems, the clock recently lost a hand as well. The committee hopes to combine outside painting and clock repair within the same time frame, since both projects would require access to the outside of the steeple. Another project under consideration is to replace the St. Louis Street door and incorporate a handicap door opener. The Property Committee will be working closely with Finance on funding strategies.

CHURCH SCHOOL - Anna reported that the Christmas pageant went well, and a lot of positive feedback was received. There was a youth group reunion on January 10th at Vennari's Pizza. Former members of the youth group Leah Bettner, Tasha, Lydia, and Agatha Hall, Claire and Laura Rapp, and Evan Wilson were there, as well as Fran and Mark Bettner, Karen Roessler, Lori Wilson, Tasha's husband, Matt, Leah's boyfriend, Anthony, and the Bettners' friend, Edward. The group enjoyed pizza and reminiscing about the fun times they had when they were in the youth group and Sunday School. All are very grateful to Karen and Howard Roessler for providing the meals for the evening. There will be a regular youth group meeting on Sunday, January 29th, with lunch and games. At the meeting, the group will discuss doing a fundraiser for the Heifer Project. February's plans are to complete the fundraiser and host a kids' video night. In March, the group plans to make a meal for Haven Ministry. A sleepover at the church is being considered for April. Details of these events will be discussed at the committee meeting on January 22nd. Committee members are Lisa Scott, Lori Wilson, Karen Roessler, Ginny Lopez, Kara VanBuskirk and Anna Barrick. The committee will re-examine the youth group program for grades 6- up, with suggestions to be shared with the Board of Deacons at a later date.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION - Cathy reported that the women's luncheon normally held in December was postponed until January. Gayle Pepper and Jan Rolecki hosted the gathering at Ridgecrest. With the success of November's "Women's Night Out" dinner, plans are underway to repeat that event in February.

FELLOWSHIP - At Joyce's request, and seconded by Mac, the Valentine's Tea will be held following the February 19 worship service.

WATCHCARE - Diane shared the committee's thoughts on the importance of Greeters to the ministry of the church. She asked the Board to

review a written summary of ways in which Greeters help to extend a welcome to both members and guests.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Lucie Rivoire Knauer

Choir Night

Wednesday, February 1 at 7:15 p.m.

Youth Choir

Sundays at 11:30 a.m.

Board of Deacons Meeting

Wednesday, February 8 at 7:00 p.m.

Discussion Group

Sunday, February 12 at 7p.m. Jack Pyper will facilitate the discussion on "Headed Toward Fascism". Copies of the article are in the library.

Property Committee

Monday, February 13 at 7:00 p.m.

Special Valentine Coffee Hour

Sunday, February 19 following Worship.

Men's Breakfast

Thursday, February 23, 7:30 a.m. at Ard's.

Soup & Scripture

Theme: The Fruits of the Spirit, February 22 to April 4, 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Christ's Lutheran Church, 100 S. 3rd. Sponsored by the Lbg. Ministerium and Lbg. Council of Churches. A light lunch of soup, sandwich and dessert will be served for which a donation is invited.

Memorial

Your thoughts and prayers are will the family and friends of Frank Hain Dietrich who passed away Thursday, January 5. The Rev. MacKenzie Scott conducted the service Monday, January 9, at Cronrath-Grenoble Funeral Home.



Congratulations

Congratulations to Tasha Hall and Matt Lamparter's on the birth of their daughter, Isa Ellen, January 16, 2012.

For Your Prayer

Bill Bobb was admitted to Evan Friday, January 27. Steve Rotolo was admitted to Evan, Thursday, January, 26. Fran Bettner, Peg Budd, Tamara Gerasimova, and Russ Mayberry are at home. The Rev. Gordon Kurtz is at Maitland Manor. Chet & Margaret Jump are at RidgeCrest. Ben Austin and Beverly Fisher are at RiverWoods. Cookie Goodall and Harriet Littell are at Elmcroft. Gloria Miller is at Rockwell.

Prayer Chain

If you have a prayer request or are interested in being notified when prayer requests are submitted, please contact Jan Rolecki at 523-6074 or Kathryn Morris at kmorris1@dejazzd.com.

Lenten Suppers

Watch for information about Bread and Soup Suppers coming during Lent.