

**Berean
Baptist
Church**

BEREAN BELL

**March
2011**

A NOTE FROM THE PASTOR...

Psalm 32:5

*Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD" —
and you forgave the guilt of my sin .*

"To move from thought to action we must feel some discomfort with who we are" --Matthew Sleeth

'In confession there takes place a breakthrough to community. Sin wants to be alone with people. It takes them away from the community. The more lonely people become, the more destructive the power of sin over them. The more deeply they become entangled in it, the more unholy is their loneliness. Sin wants to remain unknown. It shuns the light. In the darkness of what is left unsaid sin poisons the whole being of a person. This can happen in the midst of a pious community. In confession the light of the gospel breaks into the darkness and closed isolation of the heart. Sin must be brought into the light. What is unspoken is said openly and confessed. All that is secret and hidden comes to light. It is a hard struggle until the sin crosses one's lips in confession. --Bonhoeffer *Life Together*

March 9th is Ash Wednesday, the day that marks the beginning of Lent. Ash Wednesday services are noted for the application of ashes to the forehead of the worshipper. Ashes remind us of our mortality and of the practice we read about in the Hebrew Scriptures where the repentant one covers himself in ashes. The Ash Wednesday service is a particularly difficult service for the church to market today, because it does not lend itself to the 'feel-good' 'self-improvement' 'You're OK – I'm Ok' gospel that is popular.

FROM THE PASTOR (cont.)

Ash Wednesday is about acknowledging that we are sinners. As you can imagine, 'Come to Church Tonight and Be Told You Are a Sinner,' is not the kind of thing that will bring in folks by the bus-load. The double whammy for Berean is that we are Baptists and Baptists tend not to observe Ash Wednesday because it is so 'Catholic' (shudder).

I suspect that we do not like to talk about sin in church, not because we actually think that we are perfect people. Quite the opposite I suspect that after a week of television commercials point out our failures, from our acne to our male pattern baldness, from our lack of cooking skills to being reminded that we are still single, just so that we will buy whatever they are selling, we would like a break from our 'failures'. We may have a stressful job where our supervisor or co-workers are less-than-supportive, if not absolutely negative. We may have disagreeable neighbors. You get my point. We get enough negative in our lives and we would like a little rest from the stress and the strife. The products may temporarily fix our 'imperfections,' but more often they just distract us for a while and they certainly rarely ever offer a solution for what really haunts us; sadness, guilt, regret, the want of lasting affection or joy, a feeling of purpose in our lives.

This Lenten Season our worship will be focusing on the many stories woven together to give meaning to the practice of communion. This series is entitled 'Empty, Explore, Empower.' Ash Wednesday is one of the Christian traditions rituals for emptying. Ash Wednesday offers us the opportunity to empty our hearts and minds of regrets and guilt. It offers us a chance to be honest with ourselves about the sin that is a part of our human existence. But it also offers us forgiveness and hope. The products that we buy cannot offer us any real and lasting hope that our unhappy situation will be cured. Being accepting by the God who created us and empowered by his love to leave behind sin and regret offers us something that hair care products, plastic surgery and consumer therapy just cannot provide. So I invite you to make time this Ash Wednesday to come together as a church family for worship. Come together to ask God to honestly and lovingly show you what sin, habit, misplaced priority, or idol you need to empty your life of. Come to invite God to abide in the space that you will create in the Season of Lent.

God Bless You All,



WORSHIP & FELLOWSHIP NEWS

I am so thankful that the long, cold, snowy winter is about to come to an end. Soon the trees will bud, the grass will be green again and the sunlight will warm both our bodies as well as our souls. I look at Lent as a time to reflect on why Jesus gave us His only son. As we get ready to reflect and think about what Lent means, I am excited to so say that the theme of Lent will be "Communion"

The weeks leading up to Lent will have a different way of celebrating communion. I promise it will be an enlightening experience as well as a new way of celebrating communion. We will have Ash Wednesday services as well as Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services. We will be having our second Agape Brunch on April 3. We hope you can come to this special celebration. Please take the time to come and experience this wonderful time of renewing of our faith.

On a side note, for those of you who are bringing hot food for our Agape Brunch, please bring the food in by 9:45am. The ovens will not be on. This is so that all of the congregation can enjoy the meal.

Peace,
Deb Ferland



ADDRESS CHANGE

Grace Ducharme's address info has changed. Please send any correspondence for her to...



Grace Ducharme
Overlook Nursing & Rehabilitation Center
14 Rock Ave.
Pascoag, RI 02859

Her birthday was February 16th and she turned 94!
Happy Belated Birthday Grace!



CHRISTIAN NURTURE NEWS

March 13th is the first Sunday of Lent. The first Family Nurture Program for 2011 is baking bread for communion. Along with baking bread for communion there will be baking kits for each family to take home and bake bread together. The following dates are when we will be gathering to assemble and bake bread...

March 13th – The bread kits that were assembled on Feb. 27 will be handed out to the congregation during Holy Play.

April 2nd – We will be baking bread at 10:00am that will be used in Communion on April 3rd. The bread will also be used when communion is delivered to the shut-ins.

ALL ARE WELCOME TO HELP!!!



During the season of Lent there will be special Sunday night services! They will start at 6:00pm. They will include songs, prayers, discussion and communion.

Just a reminder!

Adult Sunday School meets every Sunday morning from 8:45-9:45am

Children's Sunday School meets every Sunday morning from 9:00-9:45am



CHRISTIAN FAMILY NURTURE : TEEN FOCUS

If teenagers lack an articulate faith, maybe it is because the faith we show them is too spineless to merit much in the way conversation. Maybe teenager' inability to talk about religion is not because the church inspires a faith too deep for words, but because the God-story that we tell is too vapid to merit more than a superficial vocabulary...

If the God of Jesus Christ is a missionary God who crosses every boundary - life and death and space and time -- to win us, then following Jesus is bound to be anything but convenient. Jesus Christ doesn't tinker; he tears down walls, draws up new plans, makes demands... (Dean 36-7)

John 5:2-3

Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda...Here a great number of disabled people used to lie — the blind, the lame, the paralyzed.

Charles Campbell, in his outstanding book, *The Word Before the Powers*, wonders that if one of the ways the Principalities and Powers, the Systems of Domination, keep us under their thumb is by keeping us busy, tired, and diverted. - Kyle Childress

My poor kids go to church every Sunday (that they are with me.) They have learned John 3:16 and 17, the 23rd Psalm, The Beatitudes in Matthew and are working on the 10 Commandments. But aside from going to church I don't think they see me put what I believe into action enough. How does knowing the verses and the prayers invade my normal life, make me different and challenge me to follow Christ and share the gospel?

This is one of the growing edges for our church and we feel it most painfully with our teens, or the lack of teens, many of whom, have wandered to more exciting pastures than church. We have lots of outreach ministries; clothes closet, oil program that provides heating for struggling families, food closet, Summer Lunch Program, lots of really good things. But most of these things are ministries of a few. We need to find ministries for many. But it is not just a matter of participation. It is a matter, I think, of getting out of our normal routines and comfortable lives to be immersed in ministry that serves others and allows us to gain a new perspective on our own lives, ethical and spiritual.

I mention our church ministries because one thing that Kenda Creasy Dean suggests that churches must do better in order to engage with teens, is to accept the challenge of devoting time and energy to working with the teens in ministries that matter. Teens need to see that what we believe compels us to action. Teens need to see that faith is not a collection of ideas, but a passionate call to serve and share with others.

It is often said that children (teens) are the future of the church. But that is wrong. They are not the future. They are the church now, or at least they must be the church now because they are not going to wait around for that day in the future when we finally admit that they are fully part of the church. They will learn to be Christian by doing ministry with adults now, not some day hence. →

CHRISTIAN FAMILY NURTURE : TEEN FOCUS (cont.)

There are three things that need to happen in order to engage the few teens we have now, the numbers shouldn't matter all that much. These are the teens God has entrusted to us and they deserve our best efforts.

First a simple weekly teen practice: Our teens need a person or couple of people from the church who are willing to devote time weekly with them. I don't think that we necessarily need to stay locked in a 'class' mentality. But one or two folks who want to meet weekly with the teens for pizza; to listen to what is going on in their lives and then lead them in prayer. Perhaps you could all journal and share from that. Talk about favorite TV shows and favorite music and then discuss whether these things have connections with their faith or not. One hour a week for listening and praying, with some occasional Facebooking and texting mixed in throughout the week. If we could start there, that would be a great start!

Second, an occasional teen practice: Teens like to be active and get out of the norm. So we need to find some ministries that the teens could get involved in. Ideally this would start with things that the teens are excited about themselves. But a trip every other month or so to volunteer at a soup kitchen or a local food closet. And a fun trip every once in a while would be fine too. But the focus should be first on ministry and service, second on socializing. It would be great to have some adults from church join these occasional ministry teams in going out to serve others. Going out to deliver communion with the pastor during lent might be a easy way to get the ball rolling.

Third, Direct Action: Here I am thinking trip. I mean a real trip far away. We would need to establish connections with Home Missions to start with, but I am thinking working with some American Baptist Missionaries who serve Native American's in the Mid-West, or the rural poor in Appalachia. This would be an every other year kind of thing and would need a team of people. Perhaps we would even one day take a trip abroad. There is nothing like getting out of our culture and our comfort zones to experience the life of others. It shakes our assumptions and our faith too and really stretches us to grow as disciples.

So here is what we need. We need one or two adults who will give their time to the teens. Meet with them once a week to listen, pray, and eat together. We need a group of adults who would volunteer at a more local mission a couple of times a year and then gather with the teens to 'debrief' the experience, once again over a meal. This would be a time for theological reflection and sharing. Third we need to begin to plan a mission trip with our teens.

Who is up for this challenge? Remember, the teens are not the future of the church, they are the now of the church. Thinking of them as the future only puts them off and they are going other places. They need to know that they are a vital part of our family now and be treated as such by those willing to sacrifice time and effort.

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

There it stands, that huge sugar maple next to the stone wall. It's a wolf tree and a survivor from long ago when it stood alone in this former pasture, spared as a shade tree for livestock. Now it struggles in old age, surrounded by newly growing stalwart oaks, both red and white, and a few hemlock, and red maples, none of which measures half the sugar maple's mighty girth; but they slowly lie in wait to usurp the sunlight now feeding its expansive canopy. How well I remember that tree.

It was some thirty years ago that marked my great experiment which ended in dismal failure. I was bound on tapping that even then giant to extract its liquid gold. No more paying exorbitant prices to those wily Vermonters for a year's supply of nature's nectar. No sir, not me! A years' supply, there free for the taking. So I drilled five pilots and inserted my newly purchased spigots, set the shiny tin buckets and eagerly awaited the most delectable maple syrup ever produced in Burrillville. Or so I thought.



Sap flows according to its own schedule, depending on warm, sunny days and alternating freezing nights. I learned this the hard way. Innumerable trips to the tree were rewarded by only an occasional clink, clink into my buckets. How much was to be my reward? Timing is everything, a lesson seldom learned by the eager. I knew it took at least forty gallons of sap to produce one gallon of syrup after boiling, but at this rate my yield would be measured in ounces, not gallons. After three weeks, I decided to cut my losses and go with my meager yield, barely enough to fill a large kettle. Oh well, at least a couple of pints would grace the kitchen table. When the big day came, I encouraged my wife to embark on an extravagant shopping trip. Right away she knew something was up, but I was bound and possessed to spring a big surprise on her. Syrup needs to boil for hours to evaporate all that water and reduce that 40 to 1 ratio. I knew trouble was ahead when the kitchen filled with steam, the dog wanted out and the wallpaper started to peel. Yes sir! A big surprise was in store when the wife returned. Thus ended the grand experiment and I'll spare you the details, and of course the colorful language that ensued.



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OFF THE BEATEN PATH (cont.)

Now, after 30 some years, those memories return as I sit on that wall, admire that old, aging giant, and wonder if all was worth it. The great treasure was not the syrup. It was then as now the magic of the fragrance of the hemlocks when the sun lies warm upon their needles, magic in the scent and sight of the frost seeping out from within the hardwood bark of trees awaking from their winter-long slumber, the swelling of branch buds, and the tell-tale tracks of scurrying footprints in the receding snow. Earth returns to life and the world has a freshness and vitality to quicken the pulse. The call of the March woodland is to me a message sent by God. Who could wish for more, and it's all there somewhere off the beaten path. Even the wife has granted forgiveness.

--Don Waterman

GIVE TO THE
America for Christ
Offering 2011



America for Christ gifts support Christ-centered ministries that are transforming lives across the United States and Puerto Rico—from addressing Children in Poverty initiatives and resettling

refugees violently driven from their homelands to providing evangelism training, developing discipleship resources and leading ministry workshops and conferences.

This year's theme is "Touching Lives, Transforming People."

In Christ, we have both the model and the strength to "touch and transform" people in the church and the community. It is our personal walk with the Lord that transforms and enables us through the power of Christ to live not for ourselves, but to serve God by serving our neighbors. Our hands become the tools of Christ in a world of need and opportunity. Christ's work of transformation is accomplished when we step into the lives of people around us.

Touching
Lives,
Transforming
People

MATTHEW 9:35



The Finance committee is taking a collection in the month of March. Look for personal stories of people who have benefited from these donations in the Sunday bulletins at church.

AMERICAN BAPTIST WOMEN

The American Baptist Women & Girls
will be holding their



Spring Gathering



Saturday, March 26, 2011

10:00am-2:00pm

LIVING SIMPLY

Theme Scripture is Genesis 1: 27-31a (TEV)

There will be a presentation by
Rhode Island Power & Light
Caring for Our Earth

- Bible Study led by Rev. Wendy Kiefer-O'Brien
- Informational Workshops
- Craft Project for John Clark Retirement Center
- AB GIRLS program too!

Gathering will be held at Phenix Baptist Church
2 Fairview Avenue
West Warwick, RI
(401) 821-1618

Please register with Carol Rathburn at 401-943-0390 by March 21 and let them know if there are any dietary or handicap needs.

Please bring any of these items with you...

- Box Tops for Education
- Soda Can Tabs
- Labels for Education (found on Campbell's soups, etc.)
- Old Cell Phones
- Old Eye Glasses

A CREATION CARE MOMENT: WATER

Scripture

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. *Revelation 22: 1-2*

By faith we understand God to be deeply, mysteriously, and unceasingly involved in what happens in all creation. God showers care upon sparrows and lilies (Mat 6:26-30), and brings "rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert, which is empty of human life" *Job 38:26*

From the ELCA Statement "Caring for Creation"

Fact

It takes 2.5 billion gallons of water to support 4.7 million people, calculated at the minimum water use requirement recognized by the United Nations. However, this same amount--2.5 billion gallons per day--is the amount of water used to irrigate the world's golf courses!

From "A Thirty Day Discipline" booklet

Commitment

The Creation Care committee plans to present a monthly theme. Darin and Don demonstrated two ways to conserve water. They are simple and easy. Please commit to them daily. First, when brushing teeth, turn off the faucet when its not essential to run water. You only need water to rinse and to clean your brush. This simple act can save at least 400 gallons each year for each family member. Next, when doing dishes, for small loads, wash them by hand in the sink. Start by only using a minimal amount. Then hot rinse and allow the clean rinse water to add to the original amount. That way you increase the water content and utilize all the rinse- a great savings.

Prayer

Almighty God, we hear your voice beside the still waters. It enables us to pause, to reflect, and to heed your creation. May we learn to value and to treasure the gifts and resources given to us by your hand. As water satisfies and permits life, grant that we may use it in precious ways to glorify your name. Amen

AWAB NEWS



Jen Collins will be hosting a cottage meeting at the church on March 4 at 6:30 pm. If anyone would be interested in attending, please contact Jen or anyone with AWAB. The cottage meetings are open to all and are an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about AWAB in a safe and open atmosphere. Pizza and soda will be served.

ABCORI NEWS



9th Annual
South Providence Neighborhood Ministries
Benefit Concert

Sunday, March 13 3:00pm

Phillips Memorial Baptist Church, 565 Pontiac Avenue in Cranston

Listen to wonderful performances while supporting this vital community outreach organization.

Please bring canned goods for the SPMN Food Pantry

A free-will offering will be collected

CHURCH NEWS



Our Lenten Schedule of Services begins this month with an Ash Wednesday Service.

It will be held on
Wednesday, March 9 at 7:00pm.



Think SPRING! It'll be here soon...



March Birthdays

Linda Peck—March 5	Carlene Beckwith—March 6
Isaac Collins—March 8	Frances Wheeler—March 10
Roger Landry—March 23	Linda Morgenstern—March 25
William Bowser—March 30	Rev. Darin Collins—March 30

**If I forgot your birthday,
please let me know so I can add it**



REMINDERS

Flowers help beautify our Sanctuary
and can be given

“In Honor of” or “In Memory of”
a special someone or event or “Just Because”.

Next newsletter: April 2011

Committee Chairpersons:

Please submit your report to the
Church Secretary on or before

March 17th.