

The Ambassador

News

and Views

From the Hill

December 2005

A Newsletter From
The First Baptist Church of Norwich
239 West Main Street,
Norwich, CT 06360
Phone: 860-889-0369



Choir Festival Unites Our City Churches Through Sacred Song



You never know what will surface when Adele Cofer, Maggie Schumaker and David Warfield put their heads together to plan an event. The creative genius and excitable talent seems to bounce all over the place.

This year they met and came up with a perfect piece to bring the choirs together and end a night of sacred song in Cesar Franck's, "Psalm 150." They also found the one person who could bring it all together. They called on our old friend, Godfrey Tomanek, to serve as guest conductor.

Godfrey has a way about him that calls on the vocalist to get into the music and feel its essence. With wit and charm that keeps the eighty year old relevant and in touch with his musicians, Godfrey had the congregation on their feet at the end.

The prelude to the combined piece included a delightful assortment of anthems put forth by ten city churches.

Each choir had their own unique style and reflected a bit of what happens on a typical Sunday morning in their corner of the kingdom.

The choirs came from the Cathedral of St. Patrick, St. Marks Evangelical Lutheran, Taftville Congregational, Preston City Congregational, Central Baptist, United Congregational, Christ Episcopal, Lee Memorial United Methodist, Sts Peter and Paul and First Baptist.

Interspersed between the anthems were hymns and written selections from various southern writers and poets.

Our choir performed "Be Joyful and Sing to the Lord," a vibrant and flowing piece that had the congregation wanting to sing along.

As always, the choir had as much fun as the congregation as we came together to praise God through sacred song.



Join us on December 18 as our Choir performs a Special Musical Message entitled "How Great Our Joy" during morning worship.

Invite your friends and let's Celebrate the Coming of Christ This Christmas In This special way with friends and family.

The Church At Worship



Dr. Cal Lord began a new sermon series last week entitled, "A Season of Wonder: Opening the Door to Christmas and Beyond." The timely messages continue each week this month.

December 4, 2005

*Second Sunday of Advent
Communion Sunday*

Scripture: Luke 1: 39-45

Sermon: "Crossing The Threshold"

December 11, 2005

Third Sunday of Advent

Scripture: Luke 2: 8-20

Sermon: "The Man Who Missed Christmas"

December 18, 2005

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Invite Your Friends!

Worship will featuring a Christmas Choral Presentation by our Choir. It is entitled, "How Great Our Joy!" Come hear the message in song.

December 24, 2005 @ 7:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve Family Candlelight Service

A service of scriptures, carols and light

Scripture: John 3: 16

Sermon: "The Love That Keeps On Giving"

December 25, 2005

Christmas Day

Scripture: Matthew 1: 18-25

Sermon: "What Did You Get?"

January 1, 2006

New Years Day - Make a resolution to join us each week this year!

Scripture: Matthew 2: 1-12

Sermon: "Two Doors"

Voices from the Pew Were Sprinkled Through November Services

On any given Sunday the people in our congregation feel pretty good about the ministry taking place around them. They do not often get the chance to speak about it in public though.



As part of our Stewardship Campaign this year, we asked five members of the church family to talk about their faith, the church and how they respond to God's call. George Strouse kicked it off by noting his family's roots in this church go back to 1913 when his grandfather, the Rev. George H. Strouse was called to the pastorate here. This is the only church home he's ever known. He had fond memories of good times as a child in Sunday School and BYF and at father & son banquets. That's why he has made First Baptist a priority in his life.

June Deptulski followed the next week and she shared how a sermon on tithing changed her life. Once she decided to test God, he found ways to bless her that confounded her. Today she has more than she ever dreamed.

Bob Sullivan spoke on the third week and he noted that as a newcomer he has witnessed that our congregation practices what it preaches. We use our resources wisely and find ways to involve willing volunteers in the ministry. The result is an active vital ministry.

Dave Murray shared his story on the fourth week and talked about his faith journey and how important it was to trust God to provide, like Moses and the Children of Israel did in the book of Exodus. He pointed out that God has blessed him and the more faith he puts in God to meet his needs, the more he seems to have to share. He noted that this is the point of God's blessings, to share them with others.

Lori Lord rounded out our "stewardship moments" by noting that regular giving allows the congregation to honor God with a well organized and faithful ministry and that giving is always a choice. We choose to give to those things which bring lay claim to our hearts. That's why her family makes a pledge to the ministry of our church.

On Thanksgiving Sunday, November 20th we asked for those who were prepared to return their pledge cards to place them in the offering and thirty folks did so at that time. The Pastor unveiled a "Ministry Board" which represents the many ways we use the pledges to reach out with the Gospel. Our goal is to have thirty families make a pledge this year. In the coming weeks the committee plans to continue to unveil the ministries as pledge cards come in.

If you would like to read the complete text of the remarks made by your neighbors in the pews, check them out on the website at www.fbcnorwich.org under "Answering God's Call."

Bible Challenge Continues

Have you been reading through the Gospels with us this fall? It is still not too late to jump on Board. If you started in September you should be just beginning the Book of Mark this week. If you haven't started yet, why not jump in and begin reading Luke with the rest of us? It will feed your soul.



How Great Our Joy! A Christmas Musical

Invite your friends and join us on Sunday, December 18 as our Choir performs a special musical presentation during morning worship. This choral celebration picks up the theme of joy that flows through the Scriptures. Even in the Old Testament in the midst of Israel's despair there was the promise of eternal joy. Psalm 30 says, "Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning!" That new day came with the birth of the Savior, Christ the Lord.



The music presents the Christian message in a fresh and powerful blending of familiar carols and new tunes. It provides the perfect opportunity for us to invite others to hear the story in a new and different way. Mark your calendars and get here early to reserve your seat.

Celebrate Christmas With Our Kids



Christmas Program

The Annual Christmas Party and Pageant will begin with a potluck dinner on Sunday, December 18 at 5:00 p.m. Come and celebrate with the kids as they come together to perform the annual Pageant following dinner. You will see shepherd, angels, wise men and a few others as they come to pay homage to Mary, Joseph and Jesus.

Call the church to make your reservation (889-0369) or sign up on the bulletin board in the chapel outside the sanctuary.



Afterwards we will have a visit from Santa Claus and end with a birthday cake for Jesus as dessert. Please let Sandy Stone (886-7077,) know if you are coming with children who are not regulars at Sunday School so we make sure Santa has a little gift for them.

All of the children are invited to bring in mittens, gloves, scarves or hats to share with the families at the TVCCA Homeless Shelter. A mitten tree will be set up on the landing in the back entry way as well, for those who want to participate who cannot make the party.

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Join us on Christmas Eve for our Family candlelight service at 7:00 p.m. It will



feature carols and scriptures and a few surprises to delight the heart and prepare you for your own Christmas celebration at home.

Because we are having service on Christmas Day, there will not be a late service this year.



Celebrate Christmas Morning in Worship

Plan to join us as we gather at 10:30 a.m. to celebrate with song and word. Bring your favorite gift along and be prepared to share what you like best about Christmas with the rest of us.

Youth Will Lead Worship on January 8

Our Annual Youth Recognition Sunday will be on January 8 this year and Sarah Lord will be our guest preacher.



Sarah is not only the Pastor's daughter, she is the reigning Miss Teen Connecticut and President of her senior class at Norwich Free Academy.

Many of our teens and college students will be participating and we will have a special video presentation that will highlight our ministry to youth over the last fifteen years. Come and show your support for our high school and college age members.

Looking To The Future

"Christ The Light" Will Put Spotlight on our Kids

Mary Brockway will begin working with the children in our Sunday School this week as we make plans for the annual Christmas Pageant and Party on December 18 at 5:00 p.m.. Every other year we offer a variation of the Christmas story that is contemporary and gets the kids involved in a new way. This year's story involves the Innkeeper's wife and two children as they see the light concerning Jesus. We will have Mary and Joseph and the usual cast of characters as well. We hope our children will try to be present for the next three weeks as we begin practicing during the Sunday School hour.

Scripts will be passed out for the speaking parts on Sunday, December 4th and costumes will be distributed on Sunday, December 11th. Our experience in the past has been that most costumes can be washed and ironed at home prior to the pageant if needed.

We are planning a pot-luck supper prior to the Program. Plan to bring a dish to share and make it a night for the family. There will be a reservation form in the bulletin at Church. You can also call the church to make a reservation at (889-0369)



Basketball Season Begins This Week

Coach James Brown has prepared the kids and this week a new season opens at Teacher's Middle School. We have games scheduled for each Friday night in December at 6:00, 7:00 & 8:00 p.m.



We have three teams this year with kids from age 5 -8. Several of the kids are coming back from last season and hope to improve on what they did.

If you are free, plan to drop in and watch one or all the games on any given night. The kids will appreciate your support and you could change a child's life with your interest.

Check out our church web site in a couple weeks as we upload some photos and more about the kids and their games at www.fbcnorwich.org. Click on spots ministries and go to the Basketball link.

No Sunday School Classes on Sunday, December 25 and Sunday, January 1

Concert and Youth Rally at Poquonnock Bridge Baptist Church

Meet at FBC at 5:30 p.m. for a night of fun and fellowship with kids from other area churches. All ages welcome!



Christmas Caroling

Join us as we meet after church on December 11 to go caroling to a few of our older members. We will return to the church afterwards for hot chocolate and goodies.

Yankee Swap Holiday Party - Wednesday, December 28 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

For Junior and Primary Youth Groups
Join us as we have our own Christmas Party. Bring a present you received that you really didn't like or something else from home you want to "get rid of" and wrap it up to share with someone else. We'll play games and have fun



We will be collecting hats and mittens for the TVCCA and Community Homeless Shelter this winter. We'll accept mittens and gloves for men, women and children and any type of hat or headware. There is a Christmas Tree in the entry off the parking lot for you to hang the donations.

The children in the Sunday School will be bringing in their mittens to the Christmas Party to give them to Santa.

Congratulations to Keesen Howe on a successful soccer season and Emily McFalls on a super volleyball season. Both were on teams that went deep in their respective tournaments.

Special Prayers For Those in Need



Bill Rossoll was in the hospital over Thanksgiving and ended up having angioplasty the day after. He is home and doing well... Myra Christensen had an advanced version of a pacemaker installed to get her heart up to speed. She spent a few days at St. Rafael's Hospital in New Haven... Matt Isenburg had 20 pulmonary embolisms and landed at Backus hospital for a week while they treated the condition. He is home and doing well... Mapewood Cemetery caretaker, Brett Chambers fell down a set of stairs and remains in critical condition at Backus Hospital. We think of him and his wife, Ann... We think of Al Damien as he faces liver cancer. We pray he will be given the strength to enjoy each day... We lift up Michelle Lord, the Pastor's mother, who continues her treatments... We think of Myra Christensen as she recovers from surgery... We remember Lori Lord and Bob Duntz's mom, Beverly Duntz in prayer as she continues her chemo treatments... We lift up Doris Royce, Edith Robinson, Doris Regets, Steve and Jean Roscoe in our continuing prayers...

We also want to lift up our young people in the military: Heather Stone, Daryl Alves, Chad Lord, Steve and Tim Rogers.



Lift up our college students as they get ready for final exams at the end of the semester. Lindsey Adams, Adam Barber, Amy Brockway, Bethany and Amanda Brown, Terry Dunn, Emily Dutra, Kristina Howe, Cassie and Mark Kane, Rebecca Lord, April and Casey Rezendes, Carl Soderberg, Jaclyn and Jon Vanase. Allison Walberg and Tara Wolinski.



Thank You To Those Who brought in goodies or helped package the dozen college care packages that were sent out last week. Special thanks to Karen Barber who organized the event.

Exciting Window of Opportunity Opens For Baptists in 2006



In 1800 a group of believer's gathered together on the West side of Norwich to worship and praise God in a unique way. They practiced believer's baptism and sought religious freedom. Forty years later, that mission evolved into a second church that moved to a bustling downtown. The two churches went their own way and have forged an impressive Baptist witness in our city.

Today, the two churches continue to be leaders in the spiritual community. Central Baptist is recognized for their social witness to the changing downtown community. They host the Clergy Food Pantry and have been a leader in reaching out to the marginalized in our community. They also have been host to AA groups, minority church congregations and a number of other specialized ministries. At First Baptist we have used sports ministries as a way to reach out to our neighbors with the gospel and offered a strong music program that includes a great choir and dynamic praise team. We have been leaders in the evangelical community and offered our building to many community groups such as the girl scouts, the Americares Clinic and Literacy volunteers.

Recently the question came up as to whether there was more that we could do together. It began with a very successful Vacation Bible School last August and was reaffirmed as we share Kay Lautzenheiser to do our youth ministry programming. A committee was formed and the group has been exploring the possibilities for mutual ministry.

Some have wondered if we are talking about a merger of the two churches. That is not the intent at this point, but the Committee has recognized that it is one avenue that might be explored if it appears God's hand is in it.

For now, we are talking about joining together for worship some weeks in January and February. Practically, this would allow us to conserve on energy costs which are skyrocketing out of sight right now. It also does something much more. It opens the door for some exciting opportunities. Thoughts of a combined bell choir for youth and/or adults come to mind as part of these services. A thirty plus member choir for a few of the services also could be lots of fun. Rev. Keller and Dr. Lord could enjoy working together in a dialogical sermon.

The joint services could also open the door for more joint ministries. These services would allow us to get to know each other as we forge new friendships which make new ministries possible. Some of the ideas bandied about included Community hymn sings, Lecture series, Social outreach ministries for the homeless or immigrant population, restoration of the weekly prayer at City Hall and several other things.

On Sunday, December 11 we will have a special meeting to talk about these things and vote on having some joint services with our sister Baptist Church. Come along and be part of this exciting discussion.

Check us out on the web at www.fbcnorwich.org You will find everything from our newsletters in full color, a bulletin board of upcoming events, photos of many activities and the Pastor's epistles and recent sermons. There are also several interesting links. So check it out next time you are on the net.



Answering The Call

Will You Answer The Call?

This is the question we were asked in church as we came together over the last several weeks. Will we take the challenge to get more involved in the ministry in the coming year? Will we take the blessings that we have received and turn them around and share them so others can know the love of God and the fellowship of community like we do?



During this time we have had five members of the church family share their reflections on God, giving, the church and what it all means to them. You have received four of them in the mail and today we present the last one as Lori Lord shares thoughts on stewardship.

Hello, my name is Lori Lord. I promise to only take a few moments of service time. I don't think any of us would want Cal to have to shorten his sermon this morning. I have 3 quick points to make:

- First, Why we give to God's church.
- 2nd, Why we give on a regular basis.
- 3rd, Why we give to this church in particular.

Over the years I have heard more than once that some people are surprised that the pastor's family supports the church with a financial pledge. After all, aren't we the recipients of a large portion of the church's funds? Would you believe that even though Cal only works one day a week his salary accounts for about half of the yearly budget!! But all kidding aside, the reason we give is larger than just finances. We give because God has called us to support local ministry in His name. We are called just like everyone else and we respond accordingly.

Secondly, Why is it so important that we give on a regular basis. Cal and I both grew up attending the First Baptist Church of Lebanon, a trusting congregation that managed their church on free-will giving, not pledging. As kids, we didn't think that much about what it means to pay the bills. Even during our college years we tended to give what we could when we attended, generously, we thought, but not regularly. Not until we "grew up" did we realize that however well-meaning our approach was, it takes steady income to make things run smoothly. God calls us to run an orderly ministry and it cannot be done unless the members approach it that way too. We pledge because we like things to run smoothly and according to God's plan.

Third and lastly, Why does our family give to this church?? There are so many worthwhile organizations that we could support, but we support this church because we choose to - We choose to:

- because we feel welcome here...
- because we enjoy the company of friends here...
- because we feel a part of this family...
- because we love the history of this place...
- because Adele is great to work with...
- because God has led us here...
- and because we are confident that we as a group are trying to follow God's plan.



In Closing, we have been blessed by your openness, your generosity, and your friendship. God-willing, the ministry at this church will remain vibrant and continue to grow. And let it be partly because we are a gathering of thoughtful, committed and regular givers.

Lori Lord

Our Ministries made possible by your tithes and offerings:

- Morning Worship
- Sunday School
- Choral music
- Youth Groups
- Youth Trips
- Adult Bible Study
- Wednesday night Prayer & Praise
- Softball team
- Basketball teams
- Bowling League
- Children's Day
- All Church Picnic
- Christmas Pageant
- Mother-Daughter Banquets
- Special Music
- College music group visits
- Office hours
- Sunday bulletins
- Monthly church newsletters
- Pastoral ministry
- Funerals
- Weddings
- Baptisms
- Dedications
- Hospital visits
- Nursing home calls
- Ecumenical witness
- Coffee hours
- College care packages
- New baby recognition
- Veteran recognition
- Home and work visitation
- Crisis Counseling
- Instrumental music
- Tape ministry
- Fellowship Hall usage
- Secretarial services
- Janitorial services
- Snow plowing
- Local mission
- Disaster relief
- ...and the list goes on.... Thank you!

Opportunities for offering your skills and talents include:

- Help in nursery
- Teach Sunday School class
- Host a coffee hour
- Help with annual Christmas party
- Help with Children's Day
- Sew costumes
- Offer baked goods
- Offer meals to families in need
- Help with Tag Sale
- Be an Usher
- Be a worship Asst.
- Sing in choir
- Play in handbell choir
- Sing with the Praise team
- Act in skits
- Work with Youth
- Lead work party at Camp Wightman
- Give Children's Moment
- Serve as basketball coach
- Mow lawn
- Do yard work
- Work on newsletter
- Fold newsletters
- Work on web site
- Paint
- Minor carpentry
- Handy man to do odd jobs
- Serve as church rep to Ecumenical or ABCorganization
- Take photos
- Videotape services
- Design Powerpoint presentations
- Play musical instruments
- Visit older members
- Join a prayer chain.
- Write skits
- Lead Bible study
- Mentor a child
- Organize a new activity
- Answer God's call!

Will You Answer The Call?

Last month we sent out pledge cards to all of our members and friends. Along with the request for financial support we asked you to offer your talents and gifts as well. Several of you at church have been faithful in so many ways over the years. Every hour of service makes it possible to extend the reach of our ministry.



One person who has got his hands dirty, literally, is Bruce Thornton and he reflects on his work and ministry in the following letter that he submitted for the newsletter.

Stewardship - I Dig in Dirt

What you may ask has digging in the dirt got to do with stewardship. Follow along and you will hear.

I am a depression child; we had nothing except a loving father who provided a house, some heat and some food. I was brought up hearing about the Ten Commandments, Bible verses, prayer and good Christian thoughts. I HEARD but did not LISTEN. We all scratched out a living as best we could. I went to Sunday school and heard about A Jesus.

Many years and jobs later, I began to think in a different way. I was aware of changing but did not understand it, I just enjoyed it. From a child on, my father and uncle raised vegetables (for survival) and flowers, I was taught how to weed and nurture flowers. I had a small landscaping business while employed by the state. A number of years ago I began to really enjoy gardening. I could be wrought up with the frustrations of the world and yet if I took a rake, lawn mower, shovel or scratcher in my hand, I began to be at peace with myself and the world. I was becoming quiet, enjoying the handling of God's creation --- earth.

When you are down on your knees weeding and planting, you can hear the birds, hear music, even traffic has its own rhythm. I began to hear my parents talking and began to understand. I learned to listen and not just hear, see and not just look.

God gives us many beautiful and precious gifts when we are born. He does this for us to prove that we can be stewards of his gifts. It pleases God when we become good stewards of his gifts.

How many of you can paint a room without painting everything else in sight? How many of you can make minor repairs to your home or car? How many of you can counsel a child wisely without a degree in psychology? Start thinking about your God given talents and begin to use them. That's stewardship in the raw.

Did you ever listen to the choir sing and not just listen? God gives us beauty in many ways, shapes and fashions. The next time you see a flower, pick it up if you can, and hold it to the sunlight. SEE the texture of each petal and the complete flower.

Somewhere in the Bible it says that even Solomon and all his glory and power could not produce a flower better than God.

What has digging in the dirt got to do with stewardship? Stewardship is about the whole building and grounds. Each of us has a talent to serve the building and grounds. We can sing, cook, paint, scrape, wash, mow, teach and many other talents that make 239 West Main Street the house of God it is.

God knows you can do these things and only waits for you to prove him right. Stewardship is not only about money, it is about how we use the 168 hours in a week. One or two hours a week would be no hardship to many of us and the blessing we would receive would be worth the effort. Stewardship is for all people not just a few.

Bruce Thornton



Answering The Call

Our ties to the American Baptist Churches USA go back to their origin as the Baptist Mission Society in the early 1800's. We voluntarily joined with other Baptist Churches to support mission efforts at home and across the world. That relationship continues today.

Recently the ABCUSA has rewritten their mission statement in light of the ever changing world and made a recommitment to their efforts to draw us together to reach out as light and salt to the world around us with a the gospel of hope. Reprinted below is the mission statement of ABCUSA.

Centered In Christ -

A People of Prayer, Purpose and Passion



American Baptists are a Christ-centered, biblically grounded, ethnically diverse people called to radical personal discipleship in Christ Jesus. Our commitment to Jesus propels us to nurture authentic relationships with one another, build healthy churches, transform our communities, our nations and our world, engage every member in hands-on ministry, and speak the prophetic word in love.

As a people of prayer, purpose and passion, we are in the forefront of creating a diverse community of faith where people of every race, nationality and culture gather as one in worship, witness and work.

The heart of the gospel is God's redemptive love. In our life together, the world will see the power of forgiveness to overcome alienation, the strength of love to transform hate, the power of grace to break the bonds of guilt, the triumph of hope over despair, and the victory of faith over doubt.

Through the cross of Christ we embrace the world as neighbor. Our vision for mission energizes a multitude of servant ministries of evangelism, discipleship, leadership, new church development, social justice, healing, peacemaking, economic development and education. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we work together in mutual trust, humility, love, and giving that the gospel might be preached and lived in all the world.

"Write the Vision, Make It Plain..."
Habakkuk 2:2

Reaching Out Through The Ministry of Camp Wightman

My personal contacts with Camp Wightman started back in the late fifties when I was a state BYF officer. I had never attended summer camp at Wightman till this year. In the past I had been at retreats, workdays, helped putting the dock in and taking it out, and worked with the Thursday Crew a few times, but as I already stated I had never attended summer camp.

This year my son told me it was about time I went to "summer camp." I gave it a try as a counselor at the Adults With Special Challenges Camp 1 (ASC 1) in July. I enjoyed and was so impressed by it, that on Wednesday of that week I called my wife and told her I was coming back in August to do ASC 2.

Three things made me want to come back.

1. "Special Challenges Camp" is truly that **special**, it makes everyone who comes in contact with it feel good.
2. Watching Junior - Junior High - and Senior High Aquatics camps in action, (they never stop or tire) - oh to be young again. Their contacts with the Special Challenges Camp were nothing but positive.
3. The third reason, which comes very close to that special feeling, was working with the CIT's (counselors-in-training). The first day I was at camp the three CIT's told me they were sophomores. I thought they were sophomores in college, because they responded to every situation that came their way without being told to do something. When I learned they were sophomores in high school, I realized Camp Wightman's CIT training is the greatest. CIT is the future of strong churches.

I will be back next year!

Steve Towne, Bristol Baptist Church



The new addition is taking shape now and the Capital campaign is in full swing. The building will be dedicated on April 29, 2006

Come Into His House With Thanksgiving

Kim Brown, one of our missionaries, has a ministry focused around women and children from tribal groups in Thailand who are at risk. These people are poor and often sick and frequently without homes or families that can care for them. One of the outreaches of Brown's missionary service is the House of Love in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The House of Love provides a home where women and children can be supported in all their uniqueness as tribal people with the special needs of being HIV-positive or having been physically or mentally abused or orphaned. The following letters were written by children at the House of Love about their experiences:



My name is Nirada. I love living in the House of Love because at House of Love we stay together like family and we have many activities. I really like when we

take trips together and I like when we worship every night. When I am older I want to be a leader of worship. Every night I pray that God will bless me, the other children, and all of the people that work with House of Love. I also ask God to help me sleep well and protect me from evil.

At school sometimes my bad friends do not like to play with me and they tease me by calling me tribal and orphan. When I see my friends' parents come to the school for events I feel sad that I do not have parents to do the same, but I know I am okay because there are many people at the House of Love who care about me.

I also like to go to church. My favorite story to hear is David and Goliath because it tells me that smaller people can do big things when they believe in God.

I know the House of Love is rented. If we get more funds I hope we can build a bigger home to help more children. If we have newcomers I want to help take care of them. When I grow up I want to have a shop to sell goods. Then, if I have money, I will share it with House of Love to help other children.

My name is Daw. I like living in the House of Love because I have many close friends here. We live together like one big family. I enjoy the birthday parties we celebrate each month at HOL because I love to eat cake. Every night I pray for my family, my brother, sister, Grandma, and Grandpa. I pray that they will have a good life and I pray that my friends at the House of Love will be happy and healthy. I also pray that the House of Love will get more funding so they can build a larger house. If we had a bigger house I would be able to help the new tribal children that would move here and those children would get a chance to go to school.



At my school my friends sometimes tease me and pick on me, but I love to go to school because I love my teacher. I like to study English and Thai subjects. After high school I want to study cooking and when I graduate from there I want to open a restaurant in the village.

As you can tell, the children at the House of Love are truly thankful for: Kim Brown and the staff that provide them a good home and education, God who is a daily part of all their lives, people like you that make it possible for them to live in a place where they are safe and loved. As you can see the children are praying for a new home where more people can be helped. In addition to being able to house more children, the staff would also like to consolidate facilities for the House of Love and the House of Blessing. The hope is to move

from the current house, which is in a flood plain and has been evacuated twice this fall due to major flooding, to higher ground. Please join us in praying that their dream will become a reality.

- Susan Peer

Our Mission To The World



Country Boy Praises God With Life

Mark Miller likes to joke with his kids that his band was “the original American Idols.” He might be joking, but truth is, he’s not far off.

In 1983, Simon Cowell was still two decades removed from icon status. Back then, it was a show called Star Search that launched the careers of aspiring performers-including Sawyer Brown.

“We weren’t quite rock ‘n’ roll. We weren’t real country,” Miller says. “But we were based out of Nashville, and we decided to come back here and make our version of country music. It was criticized and praised.”

Miller grew up in church and gave his heart to Jesus at summer camp as an impressionable 13-year-old. Even with his involvement with the mainstream music industry, Miller says he’s been following God’s lead all along.

“I’m not unlike every other Christian with all of the things that we battle all through life,” Miller says. “I’ve had all of those battles as well. The amazing thing is I really believe that God gives you the strength to persevere and get through all the stuff that life throws at you.”

Miller’s original ambition was to coach basketball. He actually played three years of college ball at the University of Central Florida in Orlando but opted out before his senior season to pursue a music career in Nashville, Tenn. That decision turned out to be a slam-dunk for Miller.

Sawyer Brown has released 20 albums, and received numerous awards and nominations including the Academy of Country Music’s Vocal Group of the Year Award (1996). Most who have watched Sawyer Brown’s steady career can attest to the band’s down-to-earth, approachable nature. But Miller admits that he faced some tough battles as the pressures of fame clouded his vision.

“The biggest challenge was early on, and it happened the first year and a half,” Miller says. “I could cut this block of time out and tell you that Satan really went after me hard... This industry will always want to praise you. Basically,



everybody’s telling you how good you are. If you’re not careful, you’ll start to believe all of your own press.”

Until 2003, Miller had little connection to the Christian music world outside of some friendships with the likes of Steven Curtis Chapman. But a divine appointment with a college basketball player changed all of that. The young man handed Miller a copy of Casting Crowns’ independent CD. He fell in love with the songs and ultimately formed Beach Street Records to help the band find a larger audience. Casting Crowns has since sold more than a million records, and Miller has signed a second act, a young singer/songwriter

named Josh Bates, whose album releases in September.

These days, he puts as much energy into his musical proteges as he does Sawyer Brown, but nothing takes precedence over his role as father to his 14-year-old daughter, Madison, and 11-year-old son, Gunter.

“I tell people you can take the day off from being a singer,” Miller says. “You can take the day off from your 9-to-5 job. But you can’t take a day off from being a dad, and you can’t take a day off from being a Christian. Both jobs are 24-7”

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Check out the November/December Issue of New Man Magazine at Church

You’ll find a great article “deconstructing Davinci” that discusses how we should respond to Dan Brown’s best seller “The Da Vinci Code

Check out the November/December Issue of Spirit Led Women at Church

Author Stormie Omartian writes about the Power of Praying Together.



Ring The Bells

I hear the church bells ringing,
they resound with so much joy.
A joy that's meant especially for
every girl and boy.
The bells ring out the news that
Jesus came to earth.

To give the best gift of all, that of a spiritual birth.
The bells ring throughout the land a message to the
people.

That we must share His love to all from every
towering steeple.

So join the bells in ringing out the Christmas
message clear.

And also do not hesitate to share God's love
throughout the year.

- Bonnie Walker

What is Christmas

Is it just a day at the end of the year?
A gay holiday filled with merry good cheer?
A season for presents - both taking and giving?
A time to indulge in the pleasures of living?
Are we lost in a meaningless, much-muddled haze?
Have we closed our eyes to 'God and His love'?
And turned our eyes from "The Bright Star Above?"
Oh, Father in heaven, renew and restore
The real, true meaning of Christmas once more.
So we can feel in our hearts again that
"Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men"
Is still a promise that man can claim if he but
seeks it in Thy name.

- Helen Steiner Rice

The Candy Cane

A candy cane is more meaningful
than just a "sweet" at Christmas.
It can remind us of Jesus...
its shape is like a shepherd's staff.
Its wide red stripes remind us that
Jesus shed His blood for our sins.
Its narrow red stripes remind us th
"by His stripes we are healed." (1 Peter 2:24)
Its white stripes stand for purification
by His death we were made pure.
The peppermint flavor is similar to hyssop
which was used in Biblical times for purification.
(Psalm 51:7)
Its taste is sweet, as it is "sweet to walk with Jesus.
Turn the candy cane upside down...
It becomes a "J" for Jesus.



Merry Christmas

It
came
to pass
in those
days that
there went
out a decree
from Caesar Au-
gustus that all
the world should
be taxed: And this
taxing was first made
when Quirinius was gov-
ernor of Syria, and all
went to be taxed every one
into his own city. And Joseph
also went up from Galilee, out
of the city of Nazareth, into Ju-
dea, unto the city of David which
is called Bethlehem, because he was
of the house and lineage of David, to
be taxed with Mary his espoused wife,
being great with child. And so it was
that while they were there, the days were
accomplished that she should be delivered
and she brought forth her first-born son,
and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and
laid him in a manger because there was
no room for them in
the
inn.
Luke 2: 1-7

Don't Switch off the light

It happened at a children's Christmas pageant. A boy was
assigned the task of controlling the lights. At a certain time
in the program the lad was supposed to turn off all the
lights except the one in the little manger. That light, of

course, was to represent the baby Jesus. As might
have been expected, when the time came for the
lights to go out, the boy mistakenly turned off all the
lights including the manger light. Quickly, another
boy dressed as a shepherd, whispered rather loudly
to the controller, "Hey! You switched off Jesus!"



A Powerful Witness

At a recent meeting of our Deacons a question came up on how we can best aide our families with meeting the increased cost of heating our homes this winter. A call to city social services provided some answers.

Energy Assistance Programs In Norwich 2005-2006

CT Energy Assistance Program...CEAP by appointment only at TVCCA, 889-1365 and at Norwich Public Utilities, 887-2555 (Norwich Human Services takes applications). Last year, people could start applying for oil on October 1st with the earliest delivery date of November 1st. Applications for utility help began November 1, 2005. Last date to apply is March 15, 2006. Applications will be taken at TVCCA by appointment or by NHS at NPU on Tues. and Thursdays. Call 887-2555 for apt. at NPU. November through February.

Project Warm Up...run by the United Way...can apply at Norwich Human Services by calling 823-3778. Starts November 1, no early applications. One time help with oil delivery, usually up to \$200.00. Sometimes help with gas, electric or propane heat sources, if to avoid shut off.

Operation Fuel... applications taken at Catholic Charities. 886-8346. Help with heating source, oil, wood, propane, gas, electric. Must be an emergency situation (out of oil or imminent turn off by utility company). Income levels are higher than other programs. Program meant to help those who don't qualify for low income programs, although the Op Fuel can do "exceptions" for people who are very low income. Maximun grant is \$275 per year.

CART...Community Assistance Review Team... run by Norwich Human Services. Only for people with Norwich Public Utility heating/energy sourcees. Call NHS at 823-3778 for an appointment. Team looks at person holistically and offers services that increase income and reduce expenses. CART tries to negotiate payment plan, does have some funds to help pay down bill, somewtimes can get person a matching payment from NPU.

Golden Wishes... Up to \$250 worth of help to seniors. Can be used for fuel. Call NHS and ask for a social worker. Will only use this fund once person has tried all others.

Clergy Fuel Bank... current treasurer is Fr. Frank Rouleau of St. Mary's apostolate 460-0794. Can help with oil or utilities at their discretion. Most of their funds are distributed by CART (see above.)

We also have very limited funds from the Deacon's Fund to help in an emergency. Members of the Church family get first priority.



We are also looking for volunteers to install and tape the sheetrock in the pastor's office. Tell us what you need to do the job.

Child care helpers wanted

Former First Lady Hillary Clinton once said, "It takes a village to raise a child..." The same is true when building a church community. No one person can do everything. In order to reach out and minister to one another and the community in



which we live, it takes all of us working together. When each person takes responsibility for doing one or two tasks, the whole body is blessed. That is so evident when we look at what happens through our nursery care. When people volunteer to take a turn doing childcare during our morning worship services, young families are able to enjoy our worship service and be spiritually fed and nurtured.

Can you take a turn this year and help bless someone else. Talk to Jackie Jones if you are willing to share your love in this way.



A big "Thank You" to the people who donated food and money to provide 27 Thanksgiving Baskets to our neighbors in need. at the holiday. Sandy Mehlinger, Zelda Earle, Gwyn Green and Sharon Fishkin went shopping after church to fill in the baskets and the Youth Group put the baskets together.

The Halls Are Decked and Ready For The Christmas Season

Sue Vanase, Doris Adams, Marge Booth and several others came down to church and decorated the Sanctuary for Christmas on Friday, November 25, Everything is set for the holidays now. Come and explore the wonder of the season on Sunday mornings in December. We gather to praise God at 10:30 a.m. each week. There will be services on Christmas Day and New Years Day but Sunday School Classes will take a break.



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239 West Main Street
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239 West Main Street, Norwich, CT 06360
Phone: 860-889-0369
web address: www.fbcnorwich.org
e-mail: fbcnorwich@sbcglobal.net

Sunday School Classes 9:15 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship 10:30 a.m.

Mid Week Worship & Prayer Service
Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m.

Rev. Dr. Clayton A. Lord, Jr., Pastor
Adele DiBiagio Cofer,
Organist & Choir Director
Sandy Stone, Administrative Assistant
June Pendleton, Harry & Doris Calkins are the
Production Assistants.