

The Ambassador

News

and Views

From the Hill



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

February/ March 2005

"Joyful, Joyful, We Do Adore You, Adele!"

On Sunday, January 30 we had a big party at Church. We took the opportunity to recognize Adele DiBiagio Cofer's twenty-five years of service as our organist and choir director. Surrounded by her family and friends, we sang her favorite hymns, enjoyed a piano-organ duet offered by her and her brother, John and presented her with plaques and a few gifts to mark the occasion.

Among the guests was Godfrey Tomanek, Adele's mentor and organ teacher, who had some wonderful words of praise to share.



Nancy Allen gives Adele our gift of gratitude.

After the service, the Diaconate and members of the Choir hosted a reception in Fellowship Hall in Adele's honor. Moderator Nancy Allen presented Adele with a check for \$1,500

from the congregation for her and Harts to plan a "get away" vacation. Then Pastor Lord presented her with a New York Yankee team shirt and cap to put the icing on the day.



Adele DiBiagio Cofer assumes her place at the organ that has blessed us and allowed her to use her God given talents for the last twenty five years. Adele began as our part time organist in 1980 and has become an important part of our worship team. She leads the choir and often works with the Pastor to come up with creative ideas for worship. Last Fall she was chosen to lead the City's Combined Choir at the Annual Festival of Choirs..

Our Ministry...

Scenes From the Anniversary Celebration



John and Adele played Pachobel's Canon in D as a piano flute duet.



Cynthia Strouse presents her with a placque as Godfrey praises her.



Oliver Bray shares his appreciation on behalf of the Diaconate and the Pastor presents Adele with her custom made (New York Yankee) Choir robe.



Contemporary Christian Music Fills The Last Sunday of Month

On the last Sunday of each month our Praise Team has become a part of our worship experience. Fred and Gwyn Green, Steve Contois, Patrick Myrthil and Cheryl Dutrumble make up the group at present. Plan to be with us on February 27 as they partner with our choir to lead us in singing again.



Share Your Blessings Thru Our Food Pantry

We have targeted the second Sunday of each month as a time when we can all bring in bottled and canned goods for our Food Pantry, but we will take your donations any time. We help an average of two families a week through our pantry. Some of them are disabled and others are simply experiencing a difficult period in their lives. Some families are part of our church family and others are part of the wider community. We do not turn anyone away, although we do limit our assistance to once a month per family.



What can you donate? Canned vegetables, fruit juices, tuna fish, pasta, spaghetti sauce, cereal, baked beans, canned pasta products, spam, beef stew, cake mixes, coffee, tea, canned fruit, applesauce, bar soap, toothpaste, shampoo, toilet tissue and anything else you can think of that will keep for several months. You bring it and we will give it away.

Celebrating With Those Called To Serve Us in the New Year

We will incorporate a service of installation for our new and returning officers into our worship service on Sunday, February 20. We will have special music and a message entitled, "Borrowing on God's Account."

A Coffee hour will follow the service in Fellowship Hall. Please join us.

Worship

Snow Cancels Service on January 23

Mother Nature has caused a lot of concern for those of us who like to attend worship services. Snow fell on several Wednesday and Sunday mornings in January. The biggest blast came in the form of a blizzard on January 23. The storm dropped about a foot of snow on us and forced us to cancel services for the first time in three years.

We also cancelled service on one Wednesday night and had diminished attendance for two other weeks because of treacherous conditions.

We did manage to ring in the new year on January 2 as the Pastor preached a sermon out of the book of Leviticus. We moved Adele's Anniversary celebration to the 30th and enjoyed some special music by the choir each week.

George Rezendes was the worship assistant for the month and Kay Lautzenheiser offered the Children's moment on the third Sunday.



Come and worship!

February 6, 2005

Communion Sunday
Scripture: 2 Peter 1:16-21
Sermon: "Building Your Life On God's Word"



February 13, 2005

Scripture: Genesis 2:15-3:10
Sermon: "Isn't It Always The Devil's Fault?"

February 20, 2005

Dedication of Church Officers
Scripture: Romans 4:1-17
Sermon: "Borrowing On God's Account"

February 27, 2005

Family Dedication Service for Chris, Rachele and Chelsea Weimer
Scripture: Psalm 95
Sermon: "What Do You Have To Offer?"
Special Music by the Praise Band

March 6, 2005

Celebration of the Lord's Supper
Scripture: John 9:1-41
Sermon: "You Can Open Your Eyes Now"

March 13, 2005

Basketball Recognition Sunday
Scripture: Romans 8:1-11
Sermon: "We Are All Winners Now!"

March 20, 2005

Palm Sunday
Family Dedication Service for Joel, Sharon and Conner Fishkin
Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11
Sermon: "If Jesus Were King..."

March 27, 2005

Easter Sunday

Annual Community Lenten Series Begins on Ash Wednesday, February 9 at 7:00 pm

The Season of Lent will offer us another opportunity to gather in worship with our sister Churches across the city. Every Wednesday night we will meet at one of the Churches for a time of worship, praise and fellowship. The services will begin at 7:00 p.m. and last about forty minutes. A time of refreshment and conversation will follow.

The theme of this year's journey will be "Sharing The Stories." The first service will be held on Ash Wednesday at Park Congregational Church. Our Church will host the service on March 2 and Judy Dupont is looking for people to bring in some goodies for the fellowship hour following the service.

The Lenten journeys began as a brain storm of Pastor Sidat Balgobin six years ago and it has become a highlight of the church year.

February 9, 2005 - Ash Wednesday
Rev. Sidat Balgobin at Park Congregational Church
"The Passion of You" from Matthew 26:36-46

February 16, 2005
Rev. Ho Soon Han at Lee Memorial United Methodist
"You Give Them Supper" from Matthew 14:15-21

February 23, 2005
Rev. Sheldon Keller at Central Baptist Church
"Levi, What A Guy" from Mark 2:13-14

March 2, 2005
Rev. Dr. Cal Lord at First Baptist Church
"Are You Ready For Your Encounter?" - John 4

March 9, 2005
Rev. Jim Eaton at United Congregational Church
"What Are His References" from John 9

March 16, 2005
Rev. Olivia Robinson at First Congregational
"No Name in the Street"
A drama by Edward Murch

Youth Ministry

Youth Groups Have Been On The Move



Since this picture was taken at Camp Wightman last fall, the Primary and Junior youth Groups have been on the go. They went ice skating last month at the Norwich Rink, enjoyed a super basketball double header and a trip to Friendly's and turned in \$95 of cans and bottles to be used for future outings. If you are in grades 3-5 or 6 - 8 and missed these activities, plan to go with us for Snow Tubing or Monster Golf in February.



Snow Tubing Fun

February 21 Cost: \$20.00 Invite your friends!
The Senior High and Junior Youth Groups

*Primary Youth Group Members are welcome too, if they bring a parent along (parents do not need to go tubing!)
All riders must be 44 inches tall.*

Sunday School Children Will Make "Health & School Kits" for Tsunami Victims

Over the next four weeks our Sunday School will be making special kits to help the children in Tsunami ravaged countries. To help, you can bring in some of the following items:

A Health Kit Consists of

One hand towel, One washcloth, One comb, One metal nail file or nail clipper, One bar of soap (bath size), One toothbrush, One tube of toothpaste (4-7 ounces) and Six band-aids.

A School Kit Consists of

One pair of blunt scissors, pads or notebooks of ruled paper 8-1/2" X 11" containing 150-200 sheets of paper, One 30-centimeter ruler (12"), One pencil sharpener, Six new pencils with erasers, One large eraser, Twelve sheets of colored construction paper, One box of 24 crayons,

Monster Golf Fun for Primary and Junior Youth Groups



February 27 at 3:00 p.m.
at the Monster Golf in Danielson

Cost is \$4.00 for golf.
Video games cost extra.

Call Miss Kay at 535-1395 if you plan to attend.



Basketball Recognition Sunday -
March 13 @ 10:30 am

New Nursery List Is Available

We want to thank those who have volunteered to take a turn in the church nursery this winter.



February 6 - Sharon Fishkin, Sandra Stone
February 13 - Heidi Adams, Barbara Bray
February 20 - Joanne Clubine, Jennifer Marcy
February 27 - Sandy Mehlinger, Nancy Schuster
March 6 - Fran Rogers, Brian Goldin
March 13 - Zelda Earle, Penny Sargent
March 20 - Jacquie Jones, Jeannine Pestey
Easter - Hired Help

We are always looking for volunteers to take a turn in the nursery rotation. You do not have to have small children to volunteer. Speak to Jacquie Jones and she will accommodate your desire to help.

Opportunities to Serve

You Can Help Those Suffering From the Effects of the Tsunami and Earthquake

You can help make a difference. 100% of anything you contribute through our church will go directly to the place you want it to tsunami relief. Send or bring your contribution to the church and designate it for "Tsunamis Relief." It will be sent in for the OGHS (One Great Hour of Sharing) offering and every dollar will be used to help the victims rebuild their lives and their communities..

Enjoy a sociable morning helping us fold and label the monthly newsletter. We usually do it during the last week of the month. Speak to the Pastor if you would like to help.

Can You Help Us Alleviate Parking Problems On Sunday Mornings at FBC

Church pollster George Gallup says the number one impediment to Church growth is a lack of parking places for visitors and new members. Fortunately for us, the Firestone Tire Store has given us permission to use the twenty two spaces behind their store for parking on Sunday mornings.

If you are able to walk the few extra steps, you could help make our church an inviting place for newcomers by using the upper parking lot on Sunday morning. We also have permission to use Midas Muffler across the street if we need it.



Help Us keep Our Worship Services on Channel 14

Did you miss Church last week? Well now you have a chance to see what you missed. On Wednesday nights at 5:00 p.m. you can catch Dr. Lord's sermon on a program hosted by Patrick Myrthil. Let us know what you think?

We are looking for four to six people, age 18 and above, to be trained to video tape the services. Would you like to help? Speak to the Pastor and he will set up the training classes with Adelphia

Join The Choir!



We are looking for men and women who like to sing as we begin a new year of worship and service. Singing in the choir is a great way to get involved in church life while offering up your gift of song. The choir meets each Tuesday night from 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. Talk to Adele if you are interested or want to know more about the ins and outs of choir membership.

We are Looking to put together Care Packages for our Members and Friends in the Military This Winter

If you have a family member in the military that you think would enjoy a care package from our church, please call the church office with the name and address or e-mail the information to the Pastor at fbcnorwich@sbcglobal.net. We hope to put together some packages by February 1st.



"Yes, our new sign was expensive but it works good. Real good!"

Called To Serve

Our Officers and Committee Members for 2005

Moderator	George W. Strouse
Clerk	Frances L. Rogers
Treasurer	Robert T. Sullivan
Asst Treasurer	Richard H. Strouse
Financial Secretary	George J. Rezendes Jr
Ass't. Financial Secretary	Frank T. Royce
S.S. Superintendent	Lori J. Lord
Ass't. Superintendent	Sandra J. Stone
S.S Secretary/Treasurer	Wendy E. Dart
Church Historian	Doris S. Royce
Pastor	Clayton A. Lord, Jr.

Board of Trustees

*Richard Strouse
Curt Brockway
Harold Calkins
Raymond Deptulski Jr.
Brian Goldin
George Rezendes
Frank Royce
Geroge Stouse
Robert Sullivan
Robert Walker

Board of Deacons

*Oliver Bray
Rodney Allen
Karen Barber
June Deptulski
Judy Dupont
Sharon Fishkin
Pam Kame
Sean Jones
Greg Maxim
Randy Sargent
Don Walberg

Sunday School Committee

*Lori Lord Zelda Earle
Wendy Dart Brian Goldin
Curt Brockway Jackie Jones
Joanne Clubine Rosie Main
June Deptulski Geo. Rezendes
Kristen Deptulski Cynthia Strouse
Emily Dutra Sandy Stone

Property Committee

*Brian Goldin
Harry Calkins
Fred Green Jr.
Fred Stone
Brent Weimer

Budget Committee

*Curt Brockway
Bob Booth
Ray Deptulski
Geri Diehl
Sean Jones
Mark Kane
Robert Sullivan
Dick Strouse

Stewardship Committee

*George Strouse
June Deptulski
Lee McFalls
George Rezendes
Fran Rogers
Frank Royce
Bob Walker

Pastoral Relations

*Marge Booth
Penny Sargent
Helen Walker

Mission

*Nancy Allen
Bob Booth
Mary Brockway
Judy Dupont
Buffy McFalls

Flower

*Geri Diehl
Doris Adams
Margorie Booth
Wendy Dart
June Pendelton
Sue Vanase

Reception

*Oliver Bray
Curt Brockway
Harry Calkins
Ray Deptulski
Sean Jones
Greg Maxim
Lee McFalls
Frank Royce
Randy Sargent
George Strouse
Robert Walker

Music

*Cynthia Strouse
Lori Lord
Rosie Main

Nominating

*Curtis Brockway
George Rezendes
Frank Royce
Joanne Clubine
Sandy Stone
Dick Strouse

*Denotes Chairpersons

Upcoming Events

Sprucing Up the Sanctuary for E A S T E R

Fellowship and fun are the promise for turning up to make the church ready.

Come Saturday

March 12

10 am to NOON

Please phone Brian Goldin so he can count you in. 887-6680



Breakfast Planned for March 5

The Church Softball Team is hosting a breakfast on March 5 from 8 -11 a.m. The faire includes eggs, bacon, sausage, toast and coffee for \$5.00 per person. Children 6 - 12 are \$4.00 and kids under 5 are free.



The Coalition for the Prevention of Hate Crimes

Judy Shephard will speak about the death of her son, Matthew, and how these crimes degrade the integrity of our communities.

April 6 at 7pm, Palmer Auditorium
Connecticut College.

Call Church Office for details: 889-0369



Spring Fling 2005

Get ready to be uplifted and educated about how you can take a more meaningful role in your church.

- ✓ Bible Study
- ✓ Workshops
- ✓ Fellowship
- ✓ Resource Table

Saturday, March 5

from 8:30 - 2:45

CBC in Hartford Phone Office for info.
889-0369



PALM SUNDAY MEN'S COMMUNION BREAKFAST

SUNDAY, MARCH 20, 2005

at Central Baptist Church

SERVICE at 7 am

BREAKFAST at 8 am

Donation: \$5

Care Net Pregnancy Resource Center

fund-raising

GALA & BANQUET

Thursday, March 3

- Seating begins at 6:30 p.m. Dinner is complimentary.
- Lots of opportunities to make your financial gifts.
- Mystic Marriot Grand Ballroom, Route 117, Groton
- See the Pastor for information.



practices on Wednesday nights
@ 5:30 pm and Saturday nights
@ 6:00 p.m. Join them!

Special Thanks To IKON
Office Solutions of Norwich.
They are securing a slightly
used copier for us.



Looking Back, Looking Ahead



A group of about a dozen people gathered at the home of Dick and Cynthia Strouse to watch the New England Patriots beat the Philadelphia Eagles in Super Bowl XXXIX. It was a nice evening with a "predictable" outcome.

205th Annual Meeting of First Baptist Church was a Celebration of God's grace.



We gathered on January 27 to look back at what God had done for us. It was a time of remembering and giving thanks. We also passed an ambitious budget, made some changes to our by-laws and elected new officers

There Is Still Time For You to Be Included in our 2005 Photo Directory.

We had two sessions with the church photographers so far but because of the inclement weather, we have been given a third date. Those of you who haven't signed up yet can make an appointment for Saturday, March 26 between 11:00 - 5:00 p.m. We want everyone associated with our church family to be in the book. Don't wait. Call the church today to make your appointment. This is the absolute last chance.



A Time of Celebration for The Family



We will celebrate with two families in the coming weeks as they bring their children forward in Family Dedication Services.

On February 27 Chris & Rachelle Weimer will bring Chelsea Noel before us.

On March 20 Joel and Sharon Fishkin will bring Conner Theodore before us.

Interested in Singing Some Classical Music?



Join the Community Choir as they sing John Rutter's "Requiem" on March 13 at 7:00 p.m. at Central Baptist Church. Rehearsals are on Sunday afternoons from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. at Central Baptist

See the Pastor if you would like to become and official member of the Church or if you would like to be baptized.



Holy Week 2005

PALM SUNDAY



Celebrate and renew your faith on Palm Sunday, March 20, as we wave the palms and declare Jesus the "Lord of our Lives."

Let's Celebrate the triumph together in our Community Sunrise Service at Howard Brown Park at 6:30 a.m.



Easter

Join us for our Easter Celebration on Sunday, March 27 at 10:30 a.m.

Invite your friends and family to come with you.

Parking is also available next door at Firestone Tire, across the street at Midas Muffler and Oak Tree Plaza.



GOOD FRIDAY

Join Bishop Michael Cote, Rev. Dr. Cal Lord and other Church Leaders from the area in the Annual Good Friday Way of the Cross Procession.

March 25 at 6:00 pm from Chelsae Parade

Let's gather to share the Lord's Supper and reflect on his passion on Thursday, March 24.



Call the church (889-0369) to order your Easter Memorial Flowers.

The Good Life

Yoga

Beginners Welcome!

Join us

Monday Nights at FBC

7 - 8:30

Phone Sandy

@ 860-608-4349



Recipes of the Month:

from the FBC Family Cookbook

A reminder that Summer's coming!!!

GUACAMOLE

4 ripe avocados

Juice of 1/2 lemon

1/4 C vinegar (use less)

1 T. garlic powder

Tomatoes

1 jalapeno pepper, chopped

Whip in food processor.

•••••

Warmth for the Winter.

CABBAGE PATCH STEW

1 lb. ground beef

(or soya 'beef' crumbs)

1/2 C. chopped celery

1 can (16 oz) tomatoes

1 15 oz. can kidney beans

1 C water.

1 t. salt 1/4 t. pepper

2 t. chili pwd.

(dumplings)

2 medium onions (slices)

1/2 C. coarsely chopped cabbage

Cook and stir ground beef in Dutch oven until brown. Add onions, celery and cabbage; cook and stir until vegetables are light brown. Stir in tomatoes, kidney beans (with liquid), water, salt, pepper and chili powder. Heat to boiling. Drop on dumplings.

Book of the Month

Review

The Name, by Franklin Graham

Franklin Graham faced that question himself in April of 1999, just days after the tragic killing of students at Columbine High School shocked America and the world.

Colorado's governor had asked Franklin to speak at a memorial service for families and friends. As a chilling drizzle soaked the crowd of 70,000, Franklin boldly urged all mourners to seek comfort, hope, and salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. Later he received both congratulations and criticism for

his remarks. To Franklin's surprise, even clergymen complained that the emphasis on Jesus was offensive.

Later Franklin reflected, "Why is it when people curse using His Name, hardly anyone complains? But if you speak about Him with respect or prayer in His Name, some people call 'foul'?" *The Name* is Franklin's response to those questions.

... *The Name* ...includes intriguing personal insights drawn from Graham's experiences while praying at the inauguration of



President George W. Bush and the memorial service for families held at ground zero after the September 11 tragedy.

...It is an articulate, passionate, motivating, and moving tribute to the One who bears the Name above all names...

Ministry to Families

Pastor's Sabbatical Plans Beginning To Take Shape

As Dr. Lord approaches his twentieth anniversary as our pastor this year, he is making plans to take a two month sabbatical leave from June 13 through August 8th.

When he first announced his intentions last spring, he was hoping to receive a grant from the Louisville Institute that would provide him enough money to do some traveling and give the Church enough money to pay an interim pastor for three months. He did not receive the grant so his plans were modified to fit our current situation.

Moderator Nancy Allen was empowered to appoint a Sabbatical Leave Committee to work with Dr. Lord to make preparations for his summer leave. This committee will work with the Diaconate to find supply preachers for the eight weeks Pastor Lord is gone and to insure that life at the Church continues to run smoothly



in his absence.

The goal of the Pastor's sabbatical will be to renew, refresh and reignite his passion for worship and ministry. He has already registered for two conferences that help him take a new look at worship. The first conference will be in

New York City and it is being offered by Dr. Jack Hayford from California. The second conference will be at Willow Creek Church, outside of Chicago, and run by Rev. Bill Hybils and his staff. A third trip is planned for the ABCUSA Biennial in Denver, Colorado where the Pastor is planning to meet up with Brad Bergland, author of "Reinventing Sunday."

Dr. Lord is also planning on putting together a collection of his "Epistles" for possible publication in book form and spending time on the weekends with Lori and the girls worshipping together as a family..



January was a tough month for our Church family. Dina Hoagland was taken from us in a tragedy. Erwin Diehl passed away quite unexpectedly. George Strouse Jr., although

100 years old, suddenly took a turn for the worse and left us. We lift up these families and pray for God's comfort and presence as they mourn their losses.

We lift up Les Main as he continues his course of chemo therapy. We think of Grace Latham as she returns home from a week in the hospital... We lift up Bob Buchowiecki who was in Backus with pneumonia and then returned to have a port put in so he could have chemo-therapy... Myra Christensen has also been under doctor's care and she will be having more treatments in the future. Think of her... Pam Fraser and Melinda Maynard both need more surgery. Think of them.... We think of Ken Taylor as he tries to regain his strength... Jeannine Pestey has to take it easy. She and Bill are expecting their second child later this year...

Nancy Schuster had a problem with her eye that landed her in the emergency room. Michael Duntz also spent time in the emergency room. Both are doing better now... Daryl Alves has enlisted in the Marines. We think of him as he goes through basic training... Doris Adams has been battle pain with her sciatica nerve. So has Elizabeth Strong. Think of both of them... Fred Stone was featured in an article in the Norwich Bulletin that told about his efforts to get fire equipment to the people in Iraq. Lift him up in prayer...

We continue to remember Steve and Jean Roscoe, Edith Robinson, Doris Regets, Doris Royce, Paula Stone and Ruth White in our prayers.



Summer Sports Getting Ready For Flight



Ken Kreger and Brian Goldin are gearing up to lead this year's church softball team to victory. If you are interested in playing, call the church, sign up on the bulletin board or speak to one of them and let them know. More details will be coming in the near future. The season is just around the corner.

We are also anticipating another year of fun and fellowship at the Norwich Ten Pin. Start thinking about gathering up a few friends to put together a team. Letters are going out to a few of our sister churches to invite them to join us. Let's see if we can fill the alleys on Sunday nights this summer.

Mother & Daughter Banquet



We are looking for a group of ladies to organize and plan the Annual Mother Daughter Banquet. There will be a meeting after church on February 27 of those who are interested in making this happen.

In Mission

All We Can Do Is Trust the Lord - 2/1/2005

Dear Friends,

On January 26, exactly one month after the tsunami hit, I had the opportunity to visit a part of the area in Thailand that was hit by the waves. It is one thing to see the images of devastation on TV. Even a month removed from the event, it is quite another to see it first hand. In talking with survivors in the village of Nam Khem we heard how fast the water rose. Fishing boats, many as large as good sized houses were swept up in the waves and sent

through the town knocking down houses and buildings and crushing people as they went. The heavy wood, 2 inches thick or more used to make the hulls was shredded and splintered. Some boats were broken in half. One boat was deposited on top of a flat concrete structure several hundred yards from the ocean. A large police boat, bigger than many homes, was washed probably a half mile or more from the normal shore.



Even inside homes, the water entered with such swirling force and carrying such a load of debris that people were killed. One couple told us how they had scrambled onto their roof to safety. From there, they could hear the family across the street, only 40 feet away, crying out for help but there was nothing they could do. Standing alone was one new house. It had only recently been finished and was stronger than the neighboring homes which were completely washed away. The family was busy cleaning up. While fortunate in many ways, their small factory for making Chinese desserts was completely gone. Now they are several million Baht in debt with their only way to make a living destroyed. Thousands of fishermen are in similar circumstances. Their boats are gone and with them, their way of making a living.

I traveled with Chatchai Montreevat, the financial manager here at the Thailand Baptist Missionary Fellowship office. Most of our work is in the northern part of

Thailand, 400 – 500 miles from the closest ocean and about twice that far to where the tsunamis hit. Despite the geography, several of the Baptist missions connected to TBMF as well as a number of individuals have contributed generously to tsunami relief efforts. To date, I am pleased to report that over \$40,000, more than one fourth of the total received, has come from the Baptists in the US and other countries.

The purpose of our visit was to meet with the committee that is overseeing the relief efforts, establish some local contacts in the area and to see what the relief efforts looked like. The CCT has been working in some of the hardest hit areas of Thailand. Korean Presbyterians have been rotating volunteer groups helping with the clean up of homes and generally removing debris. A church in Trang has been visiting a fishing village on an island and is helping supply them with tools to rebuild their fishing boats and equipment. Chatchai and I were stranded for a couple hours while the van we were to ride in was engaged in gathering some 400 sets of cooking pots to be distributed. Overall, this is a period of transition where emergency relief is gradually giving way to rebuilding and longer term assistance. In Nam Khem we talked with some soldiers who were starting to rebuild permanent homes. We also spoke with another Christian group who was helping build homes. In other areas though, the clean up continues.

In a largely non-Christian area, the presence of Christians helping in the relief efforts is easy to find and making known the love of Christ. For the most part, survivors were eager to talk as the memories are still very fresh. I suspect they will stay fresh for years to come. Several mentioned how fast the water came and they marveled that in just a few



Duane and Marsha Binkley serve as missionaries to Thailand.

minutes so much could change. A beautiful day one minute, thousands of lives gone and life times of work turned to soggy debris the next.

We marvel at the power exhibited when whole sections of the earth move and killer waves travel hundreds of miles in a couple hours.

Seemingly mundane decisions result in life or death. A person I know was not happy as the ride to his hotel was 30 minutes late. But had he arrived at the hotel on schedule, he would have been checking in when the wave hit. Another person I know was in Sri Lanka. Her kids had just come inside their bungalow from playing on the playground. They closed the door and suddenly water started trickling in. They opened the door to see what was happening and the full force of the wave hit. Their bungalow was strong enough to withstand the onslaught and they were all saved, but had the kids played five minutes more, what would have happened? I saw several news casts where the reporter was asking leaders of various faiths why their god would allow such destruction to occur. It is a natural question. But maybe a better question to ask is “who?” Who is leading our lives? Who is directing the mundane decisions that might mean life or death? Who can we turn to in times of tragedy? Who is in charge? Who will take us when we leave this earth? As a race we humans sometimes forget that we are really just very small. We don’t like to admit it, but there are many things that are larger and stronger than we are. We also don’t like to admit that there are things that happen that we really can’t explain.

The Psalmist asked “who” when he wrote, “I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth”. The Psalmist gave the only answer that can really help us. All we can ever do is trust the Lord and turn to Him when we need him. He is always there!

- Duane & Marcia Binkley

A Powerful Witness...

Rolling with the Curves

The world's fastest-growing fitness chain is helping ordinary women get healthy-body and soul.

By John W. Kennedy

Like many middle-aged women, Brenda Handley worked in a sedentary job and gained a few pounds every year. At 5-foot-3-inches, Handley, went from a youthful 110-pound fireball to a tired 165-pound desk-sitter.

Three years ago things got worse when doctors diagnosed Handley with ovarian cancer. Six months of chemotherapy left her emotionally and physically depleted. Inactivity led her weight to mushroom to 192 pounds. Her boy-friend left her.

"I was bald, fat, and looked like Uncle Fester on *The Addams Family*," Handley, now 52, half-jokes. "I felt like a walking refrigerator." Handley reacted skeptically when a friend invited her to join a Curves for Women fitness center. But she didn't encounter expensive membership fees, complicated dance step routines, or exhaustive workouts. Instead, she found baby-boomer women like herself who had struggled to keep off weight but, through camaraderie, managed to succeed. So far, Handley has dropped 32 pounds and gone from a dress size of 18 down to a 12.

"If it wasn't for God sticking with me and the special relationships I've made with the Curves ladies, I'd still be sitting in my apartment watching movies and stuffing myself with Big Macs," Handley says. She even feels more attractive now.

Their stories differ, but more than 2 million women like Handley have found a reason to make Curves a part

of their weekly routine. The number of centers has mushroomed primarily by word of mouth, as women with protruding hips and bulging midribs find a place of mutual support. For the most part, these are women who have never exercised regularly before or were not getting results from other weight-loss programs.

Founded in 1995 by Christian businessman Gary Heavin, the Waco, Texas-based, privately owned Curves International likely will saturate the North American market by the end of 2004, with an estimated 8,500 outlets open in the U.S. and Canada. Currently, 1 in every 4 health clubs in the country is a Curves for Women, and another 1,400 are under construction. The company also has opened centers in six other countries and is described by *Entrepreneur* magazine as the fastest growing franchise in the world.

From pain to gain

It's not surprising that Curves's simple formula of easy and accessible exercise for previously ignored women spread like wildfire. Until Gary Heavin came along, health clubs often looked more like nightclubs, catering to the sculpted bodies of 17- to 32-year-old fitness buffs.

Most of the Curves outlets are tucked away in nondescript strip malls, designed to save money for both franchisees and clients. Membership at the clubs, which normally are 1,500 square feet or less, can be as low as \$29 per month. There are no

showers, massages, or refreshment bars but just a simple, non-intimidating space to do a fast workout.

"I couldn't dream this big," says Heavin, whose 2003 book, *Curves: Permanent Results Without Permanent Dieting*, made *The New York Times* best-seller list. "I'm not that smart. But I serve a God who is." Sixteen years ago, Heavin hardly looked the part of the entrepreneurial genius. Sure, six years earlier—at age 26—he had built a system of health and fitness centers that had given him a million-dollar financial statement and even his own airplane. But the business plan didn't take into account the limits of expanding in the small towns of the sprawling Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Heavin, falling \$5 million in debt, declared bankruptcy.

By age 32, he found himself serving a six-month jail sentence for failure to pay child support. In his jail cell, Heavin read the Bible and recommitted his life to Jesus Christ.

Although Heavin had first become a Christian at age 13, that year his father left the family to move in with a girlfriend. Soon after, his mother died of a stroke at 40.

Heavin and his two younger siblings went to live with his father and the new girlfriend. The next year Heavin entered military school and later enrolled as a pre-med student in college, waiting tables at a pizza parlor to pay his way. But after two years he dropped out, bought a failing Houston health club at a bargain price, and devoted all his energies to making it succeed.

He slept on the club's floor because he couldn't afford an apartment. Although he quickly opened six other locations, the expansion occurred in markets too small to

A Powerful Witness

support such a venture and they eventually bit the dust—as did the rest of Heavin’s life.

As he sat behind bars, Heavin finally understood that God couldn’t use him until he lost everything: his marriage, custody of his two children, his livelihood, even his freedom.

“Like a wet dishrag, God wrung out everything I was proud of so that I would be totally dependent on him,” says Heavin, now 48. “I told God, ‘I’ve lived life my way and it’s a mess. Now I’m giving it to you.’”

After his release, Gary and his new wife Diane—who married him just before he went to jail—started planning how to help women exercise and eat properly before they met the same tragic fate as his mother. The Heavins opened the first Curves franchise in Paris, Texas.

On the road back to solvency, Heavin had different priorities. “God made it clear that money was not to become my god,” he says. He believes he had to suffer sufficiently to be prepared for the enormous success he’s now experiencing.

“To whom much is given much is expected,” says Heavin, who now calls Bible reading, prayer, and fellowship with church believers essential elements of his daily life. “God showed me how to handle poverty, and he’s shown me how to handle wealth.”

Business by the Book

Servanthood may not be today’s normal model for business success, but that hasn’t stopped the Heavins. In 2003, the couple gave away \$10 million—10 percent of their company’s gross revenues and 80 percent of Gary’s net income—to charities. Heavin matches the first \$1,000 that each franchise raises for

community causes such as walkathons to benefit pro-life pregnancy-care centers. Such controversial stances have led to criticism, but Heavin is unfazed. “There’s nothing healthy about abortion,” he says. “I’m not afraid to tell the truth.”

Each spring for the past seven years, Curves customers have brought non-perishable goods to their locations to help feed the hungry. In 2003 alone, clients donated 4.25 million pounds of groceries for local food banks.

Heavin is upfront with both Christian and non-Christian franchisees about the biblical principles that guide the company. And accordingly, most Curves locations are closed on Sundays.

“To whom much is given much is expected,” says Heavin, who now calls Bible reading, prayer, and fellowship with church believers essential elements of his daily life.

Although the cost of opening a franchise recently has risen with the company’s popularity, it still only takes a \$25,000 investment—which includes all equipment costs—to open a location.

With the U.S. market nearly full, Heavin is excited about expanding internationally. Franchises are opening in Europe, South America, Australia, and Asia. Like McDonald’s, Curves aims to be everywhere—although its product has a different effect than a Big Mac.

John W. Kennedy

Why women love this place.

Curves women go to 30-minute workouts three times a week that combine strength and cardio training through hydraulic resistance. Typically, the complete body workout takes place on 10 machines, with exercisers moving every 30 seconds, followed by 30-second aerobic recovery. The workout is accompanied by rhythmic music and a recorded voice that intermittently instructs the women to “change stations now.” Unlike other weight-loss plans, Heavin’s program is designed to raise a woman’s metabolic rate, which means she can still eat 3,000 calories (of the right food) a day while also gradually losing weight. The atmosphere at numerous Curves locations is almost like a recovery support group. Susan C. Hickman of Springfield, Missouri, joined, as many women do, after noticing that a friend from church had dropped a lot of weight. Hickman, 55, started going to Curves every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday to surprise her husband, Bill, who had been mobilized to Iraq with the Army National Guard. “My objective is to take his breath away when he comes home,” Hickman says. “I can’t believe how fantastic I feel.” In the first 10 weeks, Hickman lost 24 pounds, only 10 pounds away from her goal of 150 pounds. Hickman has gone from a size 20 to size 12 dress, aided by a nutritional eating plan that is part of the Curves package at signup. “I’m not an athletic person,” says Hickman, who is a foster-parent trainer. Cathy Buchanan, 34, of St. Augustine, Florida, says she has a lot more energy to play with her two young daughters since she started going to Curves. She lost 29 pounds in seven months, and has hopes of shedding another 31 pounds.

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Wit & Wisdom

Taking The Fear Out Of Death

A sick man turned to his doctor, as he was preparing to leave the examination room and said, "Doctor, I am afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side." "Very quietly, the doctor said, "I don't know."

"You don't know? You, a Christian man, do not know what is on the other side?" The doctor was holding the handle of the door; on the other side came a sound of scratching and whining, and as he opened the door, a dog sprang into the room and leaped on him with an eager show of gladness.



Turning to the patient, the doctor said, "Did you notice my dog? He's never been in this room before. He didn't know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here, and when the door opened, he sprang in without fear. I know little of what is on the other side of death, but I do know one thing... I know my Master is there and that is enough."

- Contributed by John Andriso



A Humble Prayer

Let's all bow our heads and pray as follows:

"Lord help me to admit when I am wrong, and make me easier to live with when I am right."

- E.C. McKenzie

What does Love mean?

A group of professional people asked a group of 4 to 8 year-olds, "What does love mean?" The answers they got were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined. See what you think:

"When my grandmother got arthritis and she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore, my grandfather did it for her, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."

Rebecca - age 8

"When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth."

Billy - age 4

"Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other."

Karl - age 5

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs."

Chrissy - age 6

"Love is what makes you smile when you're tired."

Terri - age 4

"Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK."

Danny - age 7

"Love is when you kiss all the time. Then when you get tired of kissing, you still want to be together and you talk more. My Mommy and Daddy are like that. They look gross when they kiss"

Emily - age 8

"Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen."

Bobby - age 7 (Wow!)



"Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it everyday."

Noelle - age 7

"Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well."

Tommy - age 6

"During my piano recital, I was on a stage and I was scared. I looked at all the people watching me and saw my daddy waving and smiling. He was the only one doing that. I wasn't scared anymore."

Cindy - age 8

"Love is when Mommy gives Daddy the best piece of chicken."

Elaine - age 5

"Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day."

Mary Ann - age 4

"You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget."

Jessica - age 8

And the final one — Author and lecturer Leo Buscaglia once talked about a contest he was asked to judge. The purpose of the contest was to find the most caring child.

The winner was a four year old child whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there.

When his Mother asked what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, "Nothing, I just helped him cry"

- submitted by both Bruce Royce and Debbie Sandherr in the last month.

Welcoming Our New Executive Minister

The Rev. Judy Allbee is no stranger to the American Baptist Churches of Connecticut. She served as a Pastor of the Main Street Baptist Church in Meriden and then as a part time area minister before moving on to serve on the regional staff of the American Baptist Churches of Indiana & Kentucky.

Rev. Allbee was with us for worship on Sunday, February 13 and she brought greetings from the rest of our sister churches as she begins her tour across the state. She also announced that our pastor had been nominated to serve as the incoming Vice President of ABCCONN and that he'll be installed on April 30th in New Haven. The position is part of a three year commitment that will see him move up to President next year and chair of the personnel committee in his third year.

Rev. Allbee has many challenges before her as she rallies the churches to come together to do the work of Christ. She views herself as a servant leader and she is excited to be working with our Pastor and other leaders across the region as we try to reach out with the love of Christ and make it real.

Rev. Allbee was born and raised in New Hampshire and studied in Maine at the University of Maine and Bangor Theological Seminary. She is married and has two grown children.



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Sunday School 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 Callender, Administrative Assistant
Harry & Doris Calkins are the Production Assistants.