



News
and Views
From the Hill

The Ambassador

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



January 2009



The children of our Sunday School told the story of the Nativity at our Annual Christmas Pageant and Party on December 14.

More news inside:

- * The Missional Church giveaway is set for January 24
- * We will see a different type of Annual Meeting on January 29
- * Our BB team improves to 4-0
- * A look back at Christmas 2008
- * Mission Mexico team plans fundraisers

Enjoy a meal with the family and help the Baptist Mission Team at the same time.

Papa Ginos - West Main St. - Sunday, January 11
from 11:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

To get an ongoing and fun report of happenings at FBC check out First Baptist Life at www.firstbaptistlife.blogspot.com

The Church At Worship



Worship
10:30 -
11:45 am

Join Us As We Worship In January

January 4, 2009

Responsive Reading - Psalm 147:12-20

Scripture: Ephesians 1:3-14

Sermon: "We Are God's Prized Possessions"

January 11, 2009

Responsive Reading - Psalm 29

Scripture: Mark 1:4-11

Sermon: "Prior Planning is God's Motto"

January 18, 2009

Responsive Reading - Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-18

Scripture: I Samuel 3:1-10

Sermon: "Listen Up! Can You Hear the Voice of God?"

January 25, 2009

Responsive Reading - Psalm 62 5-12

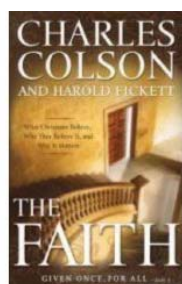
Scripture: Jonah 3:1-5, 10

Sermon: "Failure is One Stop on the Road to Forgiveness"

Every week we make an audio tape of the worship service. If you would like a copy, speak to Fred Green or Steve Contois.



Most of the Pastor's sermons are on-line at our church web site. You can look them up by going to www.fbcnorwich.org



Join us as we begin our Winter Bible & Book Study on Jan. 18th

Sunday nights at 6:00 p.m.

Colson talks about the basic beliefs that we share as Christians. Let's talk about them and learn from each other.



Rachel Lord sings.

Special Music Fills The Air at Christmas Time

Last month we supplemented the great ministry of our choir with several special music pieces. Rachel Lord sang "What Child is This?" on December 14. Brian Goldin offered us a rendition of "Immanuel" on December 21st. On that same Sunday Kevin Mariano played "O Holy Night" on his trumpet and accompanied Adele DiBiagio on the opening and closing hymns, "O Come All Ye Faithful" and "Joy To the World." On Christmas Eve Patricia Ohlund sang "Ave Maria," Shawn Rucker sang "Fit for a King," and Penny Sargent and the Praise Team offered up a beautiful dramatic portrayal

of "The Little Drummer Boy." We also enjoyed a beautiful triette by Mary Brockway, Adele DiBiagio and Cynthia Strouse called "Come, O Come, Redeemer."

The choir sang "Advent Alleluia," "Now Let All The World Be Silent," "Every Valley" and "Unto Us a Son is Given" in the weeks leading up to Christmas and they gave us "On a Still and Silent Night" on Christmas Eve.

Someone said this was the nicest Christmas ever. We had snow on Christmas Sunday and yet 91 people still came out to hear the Pastor preach on "The Purpose of Christmas." In his message he reminded us that Christmas came so God could tell us how much he loved us.

On Christmas Eve we sang carols and listened as Nancy Allen, Mary Brockway, Cliff Vanase, Zelda Fellows, Bob Walker and Cynthia Strouse read scriptures and shared brief meditations. The Pastor then drew it all together with a brief message titled, "What Do We Do Next?" He challenged us to take the message of Christmas and share it with all we meet in the new year. The rain and fog kept some people away but 177 still ventured out those in attendance said our Christmas Eve service this year proved to be one of the most meaningful in years.

We closed out the year with the preaching of Rev. Norman Bardsley and the music of our Praise Team as they offered up a special song titled, "He Died on the Cross For the Lost."

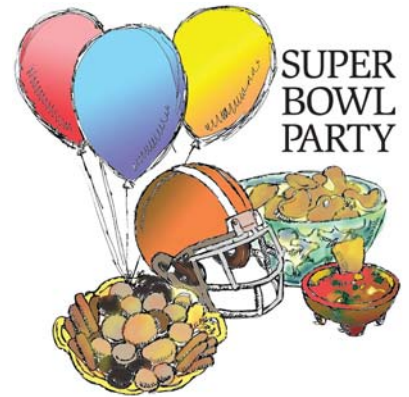


Penny Sargent plays her drum at the manger.

Opportunities & Events @ FBC



You are invited to a
Festival of Lights and Carols
at Grace Episcopal Church
at 5:00 p.m. on
Sunday, January 11



**SUPER
BOWL
PARTY**

Sunday, February 1
@ 6:00 p.m.
at the home of
Cal & Lori Lord
11 Lincoln Avenue

Bring a snack or
finger food to share.
(Call Lori to find out what to bring if
you have any questions.)

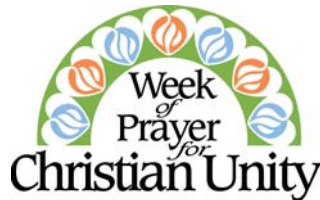
*There will be a giant puzzle for those
who don't want to watch the game.*

Come to the SUNL Annual Meeting featuring Rev. Glynnis LaBarre

She is a wonderful presenter-- national coordinator for Transformational Ministries with ABCUSA-- I know you will find her to be an engaging speaker on the topic of Doing Ministry in Hard Times (what could be more timely?)

Sunday, Jan 11th, 3 PM at Old Mystic Baptist Church.

Celebrate our Common Faith in Christ
at United Congregational Church
Friday, January 23 at 7:00 p.m.
Guest Speaker - Dr. Jeremiah Lowney



Annual Church Meeting

Thursday, January 29 at 7:00 p.m.
(Snow date - Thursday, February 5)
Dessert and Coffee will be served

- * A slide show
- * Election of officers
- * Approval of 2009 budgets
- * Approval of By-law changes

Join us as we
explore where
God is leading
us in 2009.



This is your opportunity to talk about the ministries you would like to see us engage in and help us figure out how to begin. Most of the meeting will focus on this. All members and friends are encouraged to attend.

"We want to be a congregation that seeks to impact our community and our world. We are a church with a mission. We need you to help us define that mission."

The Mystic River Choral
will present
Radiant Light
Sunday, January 18 at 3:00 p.m.
at Harkness Chapel, Connecticut College



Open Mic
A night of Christian music
at First Baptist Church
Saturday, January 17
at 6:00 p.m.

Coffee Hour Hosts Needed



The Deacons are looking for folks to host a weekly coffee hour. All you need to do is come in a little early to set up. We have everything you need, including the directions. If you are interested contact Fran Rogers or Mark Kane. There is a sign up sheet in the upstairs kitchenette.



Nursery Volunteers Needed

If you are interested contact Laura Kreger or the church office.

Looking Back at December

Santa Claus Came To Town



The list looks like a “Who’s Who” at First Baptist. Going back to 1985 when Sunday Superintendent Donna Weimer cajoled her husband Brent to play the part, we have had a different person serve as Santa’s special stand in at our Annual Christmas Party & Pageant. Doug Wolf, our resident thespian, donned the costume in 1986. Paul Lorraine, who was fixture

in the role in the 1970’s were among the first to take the honors. Young people like Ben Strouse, Brian Goldin & Timothy Rezendes have all taken turns. So have some of our senior members like Harry Calkins, Don Walberg and Oliver Bray. This year Randy Sargent added his name to the roll and did a superb job. The best part each year is guessing who Santa tapped for the role as they arrive.

Our Santas at First Baptist Church

2008 - Randy Sargent	2000 - Timothy Rezendes	1992 - John Kozak
2007 - Brian Goldin	1999 - Fred Green Sr.	1991 - Dave Royce
2006 - Ray Deptulski Jr.	1998 - Curt Brockway	1990 - Bob Duntz
2005 - Fred Stone	1997 - Don Walberg	1989 - Ron Watson
2004 - Rich Erb	1996 - Cal Lord	1988 - Bob Buchowiecki
2003 - Harry Calkins	1995 - Oliver Bray	1987 - Paul Lorraine
2002 - Les Main	1994 - Ben Strouse	1986 - Doug Wolf
2001 - Wayne Morse Sr.	1993 - George Rezendes	1985 - Brent Weimer



Jarod LaFlamme and Chelsey Calkins as Joseph and Mary in our pageant.



Andrew and Seder and Rebecca Galligan are married in a blizzard at the Norwich Inn



Muriel Roderick, Kathy and Amanda Duntz help out at the Interfaith Luncheon.

The new pictorial directories of our members and friends were made available at the church.

Church Photo Directory



Our Ministry To Youth



We had kings...



We had shepherds...



We had angels...



Sunday School
meets at 9:15 a.m.
each week

Our Basketball Team Begins With 4 - 0 Start



They practice hard and they play hard. Coach Leonard Miller has the kids playing together as a team and the formula is working. The team has enjoyed a few easy games but it has done well against the better competition too. They are led by Desmond Miller and Ryan Lusk on offense and Ibo Rivera on defense. The team includes boys and girls this year and they all get to play. All have also contributed to the success of the early part of the season.



Upcoming games are on Friday January 23 at Teachers Memorial at 7:00 p.m. and Tuesday, January 27 at Hunting Elementary School at 8:00 p.m.

People, Places & Possibilities



We lift up Edith Robinson in our prayers as she continues to recover from her broken hip. She had to have another surgery the end of last month... Bob Duntz was back in the hospital and we lift him up in our prayers... We think of Bob Booth who

continues at Haven Health Care on Laurel Hill. Stop by and say hello if you get a chance. He enjoys visitors... We continue to lift up Sebastian Lucien as he recovers from lead poisoning... We pray for Ralph "Buddy" Bowser in our prayers. He was back in Backus Hospital this week... We lift up Susie Rothholz's dad, Elmer Dennis, in our prayers... We think of James Murray in our ongoing prayers...

We keep Kristen Deptulski and Mike Rothholz in prayer as they look forward to becoming a parents in the coming months...

We lift up the family of Hal Brockway in prayer. Hal died unexpectedly just before Christmas. He was an active part of our congregation for many years, singing in the choir, helping with the newsletter, cooking at fellowship events and doing some custodial work. We think of his son, Mikel and his brother and sisters Curt, Nancy and Wendy.

We continue to think of Jean Roscoe, Nancy Oat, Doris Regets, Jimmy Marino, and Michelle Lord in our prayers...



We are going to work in the church nursery on Saturday, January 10th at 8:30 am. We will finish priming and paint the portion that is primed. Also we'll demo the shelving, move some stuff out and measure for the drop ceiling.

Come join us.

Ministry Helpers in January

In the Church Nursery:

January 4 - Laura Kreger, Fran Rogers & Heather Adams

January 11 - Kristen Deptulski & Rachel Lord

January 18 - Rachele Weimer & Cheryl Dutrumble

January 25 - Jeannine Pestey & Bonnie Ambruso

As Ushers & Greeters

January 4 - G Strouse, K Barber, R Sargent & M Kane

January 11 - F Royce, C Brockway, G & N Schuster

January 18 - H Calkins, L McFalls, B & P Adams

January 25 - G Strouse, K Barber, R Sargent & M Kane

As Worship Assistants

January 11 - Rosie Main

January 18 - George Strouse

January 25 - Lori Lord

As Counters

January 4 - Mark Kane & Oliver Bray

January 11 - June Deptulski & George Strouse

January 18 - Frank Royce & Bob Walker

January 25 - Nancy Allen & Gwyn Green

People News

Timothy and Karin Rezendes welcomed Benjamin Timothy Rezendes into the world on Saturday, December 28 at 3:22 a.m. He was 7 lb, 7 oz and happy to see everyone, including his grandmother, Amy Rezendes who just happened to be there! Julia



Rogers met her new family on Thursday, December 18 when she and her dad, Mark, arrived at JFK International Airport. Priscilla, Fran and several uncles and aunts were there to celebrate her long anticipated arrival home... Kathy Bartkowski has had quite a month. She has played, accompanied, sang and directed several musical productions over the last month. From Rhode Island to the other side of Hartford, Kathy has shared her gifts. I ran into her at Norwich Free Academy where she accompanied the three choirs in their winter concert... Rosie Main went home for these holidays and visited family in Oklahoma... Connie Jensen and Nancy Janco are gearing up for a cruise in a few weeks. They are excited and ready to go... Brian and Laura Howe took in the sites of New York City over the holidays as did the Lord family and the Ingoglia family... Cassie Kane took a job in the Danbury area and has moved. We wish her well... Ashley West is engaged and is looking forward to a July wedding. congrats! Luis Pabon and Stan Boyes are getting ready to head out to the Miss America Pageant in Las Vegas. Luis is the Executive Director of the Connecticut Program and Stan is the Field operations Director. The Pageant will be on TLC on Saturday, January 24... Shawn Rucker is in a new show at the Spirit of Broadway Theater that runs from January 6 - February 6th. It's called "How Can You Run With A Shell on Your Back?" Jackie Vanase is offering several Yoga classes in the area. Call



her if you are still trying to make healthy resolutions for the new year... Ken Taylor has decided to move back to North Carolina. We wish him well... Do you remember Sandy Calender, our former Clerical Assistant? She's living in Seattle and newly engaged. She spent Christmas holidays with her youngest son, wife & twin boys, her daughter & her fiancée, Steve (all pictured to the left)...

Did we miss you? Drop us a note and let us know what is happening in your neck of the woods.



Check us out on the web at www.fbcnorwich.org. You will find our monthly newsletter and lots more. You can keep up with what is at happening at church at www.firstbaptistlife.blogspot.com.

Go to www.pastoral.blogspot.com and you will find Pastor Lord's musings and suggested links to devotional sites.

Wit, Wisdom & Wackiness...

The Cab Ride

So I walked to the door and knocked. 'Just a minute', answered a frail, elderly voice. I could hear something being dragged across the floor. After a long pause, the door opened. A small woman in her 90's stood before me. She was wearing a print dress and a pillbox hat with a veil pinned on it, like somebody out of a 1940s movie.

By her side was a small nylon suitcase. The apartment looked as if no one had lived in it for years. All the furniture was covered with sheets. There were no clocks on the walls, no knickknacks or utensils on the counters. In the corner was a cardboard box filled with photos and glassware.

'Would you carry my bag out to the car?' she said. I took the suitcase to the cab, then returned to assist the woman. She took my arm and we walked slowly toward the curb.

She kept thanking me for my kindness. 'It's nothing', I told her. 'I just try to treat my passengers the way I would want my mother treated.'

'Oh, you're such a good boy', she said. When we got in the cab, she gave me an address, and then asked, 'Could you drive through downtown?'

'It's not the shortest way,' I answered quickly. 'Oh, I don't mind,' she said. 'I'm in no hurry. I'm on my way to a hospice'. I looked in the rear-view mirror. Her eyes were glistening. 'I don't have any family left,' she continued. 'The doctor says I don't have very long.' I quietly reached over and shut off the meter.

'What route would you like me to take?' I asked. For the next two hours, we drove through the city. She showed me the building where she had once worked as an elevator operator.

We drove through the neighborhood where she and her husband had lived when they were newlyweds. She had me pull up in front of a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had gone dancing as a girl.

Sometimes she'd ask me to slow in front of a particular building or corner and would sit staring into the darkness, saying nothing.

As the first hint of sun was creasing the horizon, she suddenly said, 'I'm tired. Let's go now'

We drove in silence to the address she had given me. It was a low building, like a small convalescent home, with a driveway that passed under a portico.

Two orderlies came out to the cab as soon as we pulled up. They were solicitous and intent, watching her every move. They must have been expecting her.

I opened the trunk and took the small suitcase to the door. The woman was already seated in a wheelchair.

'How much do I owe you?' she asked, reaching into her purse.

'Nothing,' I said

'You have to make a living,' she answered.

'There are other passengers,' I responded. Almost without thinking, I bent and gave her a hug. She held onto me tightly.

'You gave an old woman a little moment of joy,' she said. 'Thank you.'

I squeezed her hand, and then walked into the dim morning light. Behind me, a door shut. It was the sound of the closing of a life.

I didn't pick up any more passengers that shift. I drove aimlessly lost in thought. For the rest of that day, I could hardly talk. What if that woman had gotten an angry driver, or one who was impatient to end his shift?

What if I had refused to take the run, or had honked once, then driven away?

On a quick review, I don't think that I have done anything more important in my life. We're conditioned to think that our lives revolve around great moments. But great moments often catch us unaware-beautifully wrapped in what others may consider a small one.



Engaged in Mission

Who Is My Neighbor?



Lisa Lapointe, Shawn Rucker and Steve Ohlund all helped at the Extreme Makeover last month. It gave them a different slant on life and faith.

In December several of our members got to help out on the Extreme Home Make Over Project in Voluntown. It was a very rewarding experience and it was one more example of how we are able to share the love of God outside of the work we do together as church. Michelle Chaffee, Lisa Lapointe, Shawn Rucker, Erica Corbett, Ken Kreger and Patricia and Steve Ohlund all contributed to the project in various ways.

Erica Corbett said "The best part of volunteering that night was meeting the brother in law of the man who passed away. He took the time to personally shake everyone's hand and say 'thank you'. To hear how appreciative he was made me realize how we all should just reach out of our busy schedules and do for others."

Lisa Lapointe talked about the awesome feeling of knowing you were doing something good for someone else. Shawn Rucker commented on how much she enjoyed knowing she was contributing by doing something she was gifted at (giving massages to the tired workers.)

We have been talking about being a missional church. That means we are all missionaries and called to go out in the world to do what we do to make a brighter future for our community. It means sharing the love of God we have in our hearts with other people. The best way to do that is through concrete acts of kindness.

You don't have to go to Mexico or Africa to be a missionary. You can share God's love right here in the greater Norwich area.

A Missional Church is a congregation that sees its ministry extending beyond the walls of the building and impacting the community around it with the love of God. It is made up of people who see their every day activities as an extension of their faith.

Ready, Set...



Last Sunday afternoon we met to discuss our plans for the 2009 mission trip to Mexicali, Mexico. We will work with our missionaries, Rick and Mercy Barnes, and the churches of the Baja region between February 24 and March 3.

Returning team members include; Nancy Allen, June Deptulski, Amanda Duntz, Mark Kane, Lisa Lapointe, George Rezendes, Pastor Michelle Madsen Bibeau and myself.

Newcomers include Michelle Chaffee, Erica Corbett, Amanda Duntz's friend, Amber Manning. Rob and Julie Wagner are also signed up. The Wagners own a construction business locally and bring some additional expertise to the mission. June Deptulski's sister-in-law Patty Bober and her daughter, Sarah will be joining us as well. Central Baptist is sending Mark Salomon, Sue Fage, Chad Pfeiffer, Stacey Sedotti and Ann Kesckes.

That is a total of twenty who are committed to going. The total cost of the trip will run close to \$14,000 and we will be looking for donations. As part of our fundraising efforts we will also be planning and hosting a few fundraising efforts. So stay tuned. The adventure is about to begin as we share God's love in Mexico.

If you would like to donate to the cause you can do so by mailing a check to the church and marking it "mission Mexico" in the memo line. Any donation, large or small, will help. This is one more way that our churches are making a difference in the world and you can be a part of it.



Would you like to become a mission partner with Rick and Mercy Barnes in Mexico? We are looking for 12 families who will give a gift of \$50 to directly support the ministry in Northern Mexico. Your gift will help Mercy and Rick continue the great work they are doing. Speak to the Pastor if you want to accept the challenge and take a month in the coming year.

Our Ministry To The Family

Saving Grace

Unmerited. Undeserved. Essential

by Michael Sytsma



Have you ever noticed the uncanny ability your spouse has to spot all the unholy aspects of who you are? Before I was married, God said, “Mike, you have some rough edges. To help you become more Christ-like, I’m giving you Karen. That should do the trick.”

So he brought Karen, whom I love dearly, into my life. My first response when she points out my flaws? Not gratitude! I don’t *want* to acknowledge that there may be ugly things within me, so instead I strike back: “What’s your problem?”

Then I have the choice of either denying my failings or owning them. And Karen can either harbor anger and resentment or offer grace and forgiveness.

Imagine a marriage filled with grace. A spouse who extends sweetness, kind speech, unmerited favor. My wife does that. I’m still working on it. Most of the time I don’t deserve mercy. Yet Karen can look at me with love and extend unmerited favor.

She chooses to clean up the sink and put the cup in the dishwasher and never say a word. That’s grace.

Why do we extend grace-especially over and over-to our spouse? First, because God is a God of grace; he freely extends it to us.

Second, because it’s a healing and restorative force. As God extends his grace to us and as we in turn extend grace to our spouses, we become better friends and lovers and can even experience deep and renewed levels of trust.

Third, we extend grace because it’s the only way to have a great marriage that lasts. Our spouses aren’t perfect. And neither are we. Grace allows us to have a great marriage anyway. And learning to extend that grace (which is neither ignoring faults nor demanding change) will make you a better, more Christlike person.

If you need to practice expressing grace to your spouse, here are four ways to start.

1. Focus on the positive.

In Matthew, Jesus tells the parable of the weeds: “A man...sowed good seed in his field. But...his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat.... The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.’” (Matthew 13:24-30). In other words, “Don’t mess with those weeds. You’ll do too much damage if you try. Leave them alone and let God sort it out in the end.”

We often don’t do that in marriage. We go, “I really like who you are, but this one little thing, I’m going to pull that weed out of you.” And we begin to focus more on the negative- trying to pull up those weeds in our spouse’s life-and lose sight of the positive.

One of the things I love about my wife is that she’s persistent. If she gets something in mind, she makes it happen. One of the things that irritates me about her is her stubbornness. What’s the difference between persistence and stubbornness?

If Karen’s vacuuming the floor, and I step in front of her to get a hug, if I’m not careful, I’ll get sucked up in the vacuum. She’s on task.

If I see that as stubbornness- the negative characteristic-it becomes difficult for me to love her. If I can focus on the persistence-the positive side-and remember that this is part of what I love in her, not only do I nurture and grow what’s

positive in her, but I nurture and grow my character too.

How do we best do that? The apostle Paul tells us: “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things” (Philippians 4:8-9). We need to concentrate on things that are the *best*, not the worst.

List some things that irritate you about your spouse, and then go through each and try to find the strengths.

2. See the person God created.

Too often we see things that irritate us and we vilify our spouses.

For instance, a spouse may believe that his partner doesn’t want to have sex not because she’s tired or because her desire’s different from theirs, but because he or she is a mean, withholding person.

Another example is the husband who told me, “My wife doesn’t clean the house and it drives me nuts.”

“Why doesn’t she?” I asked.

“She just won’t do it. She is a slob.”

When we write off our spouse’s character as bad, we are on the way to destroying our relationship.”

Scripture is filled with examples of how Christ believed the best of people. God calls us to do the same. He looks at me and says, “Love your wife.” Sometimes that’s difficult; the way I can love her is by seeing the best of who she is.

Not that it excuses what’s not healthy.

Our Ministry To The Family

Jesus didn't say, "Your sin wasn't a big deal." He said, "I'm not going to condemn you. Stop sinning." Jesus always saw the vision of who God had created one to be, of who they could become.

What would my marriage be like if I always looked at my wife with that same vision? Not stuck on who she isn't yet, or on her brokenness and humanness, but believing the best in who she is. Seeing the vision of who she could be and believing in her capability to become that.

Kathy's husband, Rick, is a highly focused individual. He's slightly *ADHD*, passionate in his work, and he rarely gets home on time for dinner.

"He knows dinnertime is important to me," she told me bitterly. "If he truly loved me, he'd make it happen."

I said, "So you see him as a mean, withholding, angry individual?"

She sat for a minute, stunned, because that's who she'd just described.

You could see the wheels spinning as I tried to process my question.

"Then how can we focus on the goodness of his heart?" I challenged her. "How can we see him for who he is and not use the behaviors that irritate you to label him as bad?"

When I presented Rich in this light, Kathy was able to understand his behaviors weren't really about her, and she was able to distinguish between the irritating behavior and the good person God created.

3. Celebrate who your spouse is.

Too many people spend their entire marriages trying to conform their spouses into their image rather than allowing God to conform their spouses into His image.

In essence we say, "If you don't see this issue my way, then *you* are wrong. And I need to help you to be right, which is the way I see it."

And what if you're not right? Or what if you are, but there's a different way- your spouse's way- to get there? Can you step back and celebrate him being him?

If I choose to express love, acceptance, and forgiveness, then the spirit of God can come in. He can prick his heart in ways that I can't begin to. He can point out far

deeper issues than I can. If I believe the best in him, focus on his strengths, care for him, and allow him to be who God is creating him to be, then God shows up with his power and conviction.

4. Express ongoing forgiveness.

When I don't believe the best in my spouse, when I don't accept and celebrate her for who she is, I develop an ongoing irritation that becomes infectious. And I begin to associate her with everything that's painful and unhealthy.

Instead I need to nurture ongoing forgiveness that allows me to continually love and accept her, while letting go of her humanness and what isn't developed or matured yet.

I know my wife will do things, because of who she is, that irritate me. She's not trying to annoy me. I'm just sensitive in those areas.

It's not about her. It's about me. So I need to acknowledge I'm intolerant of those things and forgive her.

Most issues couples struggle with are not sin-based. They're differences in personality, in behavior, in style.

I know you're going to tell me to turn left when I've turned left here a million times. And that's okay because that's who you are. You're not doing it because you think I'm a horrible driver or I'm incompetent. So I forgive you before you even do it.

That allows me to smile and say, "Okay dear," then turn. That's the spirit of preemptive forgiveness, and it's an ongoing extension of grace.



Many years ago I watched journalist John Stossel do a TV segment called "Love, Lust, and Marriage." He talked to a couple who'd been married more than 50

years and asked them about the relationship and what it takes to have a long-lasting marriage.

The wife said, "Well, you know, I learned that I need everything to be spotless."

The husband said, "And I'm a spotter."

They both just had to get used to it.

I thought, *That's it. That's the core of grace in marriage.*

What did each of them have to go through to understand that? First, they both had to accept who they are. She had to accept that she required things to be spotless. He had to accept that he makes messes.

She had to learn, "He's not coming behind me making messes everywhere because he doesn't love or respect me." She couldn't vilify him. He's a spotter. That's what he does.

He had to learn, "She's not coming behind me cleaning up all the time because she hates me. She comes behind me cleaning up all the time because she requires life to be spotless. That's just who she is."

And how wonderful when they could get to the point of her saying, "You're spotting again." And his reply: "Yeah. You're gonna need to clean them up again, aren't you?"

In my marriage I've worked for 23 years on my issues, and they're not any better. And my wife keeps extending grace, and God keeps extending grace and convicting. And I keep working. But I couldn't-or wouldn't-work on them as intentionally if my wife didn't treat me as though she believed that I could succeed and grow.

Spend time asking God if you exhibit this grace and forgiveness toward your spouse. Ask God to help you exhibit those qualities in your life and marriage, remembering that God loved us so much, that even before we were born, and while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God carried a strong preemptive grace and forgiveness toward us. Should we not offer the same to our spouses?

A Powerful Witness

A Child's Faith

by Susan Senechal

Seven pennies and a nickel fell out of my daughter's Cinderella purse as she picked it up for church. "You better leave those here so you don't lose them," I said.

"I want to take them for the offering," Brianna replied, a huge smile on her face. My heart sang. I was thrilled my four-year-old wanted to give an offering, not just what she could swipe from my wallet in the seconds before the plate came to our row but from her own "savings." *She's really delighting in giving,* I thought.

Several times during the service Brianna took out her money, looked at it, and returned it to her change purse. When offering time finally came and the usher approached our row, she wouldn't let the coins go.

"Put them in, please," I whispered in her ear, but she shook her head. *We're holding up the offering, and everyone is watching and waiting,* I thought. But Brianna couldn't let go of her money.

I finally passed the plate on, disappointed. Doesn't *she know there's more where that came from? Much more?* I the grand scheme of things, seven pennies and a nickel wouldn't do much to further the church's ministry but it would bring me



untold joy to watch my daughter give willingly.

Then I realized how like my daughter I am. How often do I say I want to give my dollars or time or talents to God, when in reality I'm often not willing to let go.

Like my daughter, the more I look at what's in my hand, the more difficult it is to give it up. If I give my money to God, how will I make my checkbook balance? If I give my time to volunteer at a food

pantry, where will I find the time to shop for groceries and fix dinner for my family? If I use my skills for God, what if I discover I'm not as talented as I think? Or what if someone criticizes my work? Will my heart-and my ego-be able to withstand that?

So I hold on to my "12 cents worth," and God says to me, *Don't you know there's so much more where that came from?*

Like my daughter, the more I look at what I perceive is mine, the harder it is to let go.

Scripture reveals that I'm wrong to think my offering is about me or what's mine. David writes that "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world,

and all who live in it" (Psalm 24:1). Maybe as I remember that everything I have is God's gift, entrusted to me, I'll hold it less tightly and use it for his kingdom.

I'm also wrong to think God won't abundantly re-supply what I need. God offers a challenge to believers in Malachi 3:10, "'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.'" God promises that when I give to him, he'll return blessing upon blessing. I don't need to worry if I'll have enough for myself. As he provided for the widow who offered Elijah the last of her oil (1 Kings 17), God daily re-supplies what I need.

As the service drew to a close, Brianna whispered in my ear, "I want to give my offering." And my heart rejoiced again. We found the usher's room after the service and dropped the coins into the box. With God's help, I hope I'll stop gripping my things so tightly as well.

Copyright Today's Christian Woman Magazine November/December 2008. Reprinted with permission.

You can pick up this and other devotional magazines at church on our literature table.



Faithful Stewardship at First Baptist Church

As we wrapped up a very successful stewardship campaign this Fall, George Rezendes shared some numbers about the faithfulness of our congregation to support our ministry on an ongoing basis. Below you will see a chart that reflects the number of people whose annual giving falls within the range of each category.

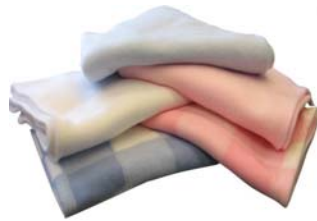
Annual giving	# of families	Annual giving	# of families	Annual giving	# of families
0 - \$ 100	26	\$410 - 500	1	\$1,501 - 2,500	11
\$101 - 200	4	\$501 - 750	10	\$2,501 - 5,000	8
\$201 - 300	5	\$751 - 1,000	5	\$5,001 - 25,000	7
\$301 - 400	7	\$1,001 - 1,500	15		

Missional Church Giveaway Set For Saturday, January 24

"Would anyone outside your membership notice if your church closed its doors tomorrow?" That is the question Glynis LaBarre asked the group of us who were at the Missional Church Seminar last Spring. She reminded us that we were called to be light and salt in our world. We have a mission that was given to us by our Lord. Unfortunately we have become so inward looking that many of our churches have lost their ability to make a difference in their own neighborhoods.

A missional church is one that takes Christ's call seriously. It is a church that shares Christ's love not only with each other, but to a hurting world outside the doors of the church.

This winter we have been gearing up for one of the projects that has arisen from that seminar. On January 24 we will be sharing "winter survival kits" with our neighbors in our giveaway program at the Martin Luther King Center



on January 24 from 10 a.m. to noon. We will greet our neighbors with cups of hot coffee, cocoa and cupcakes. We will also give each family one of our survival kits.

The kits will include the "no sew" blankets we made last fall, a recipe and the ingredients for a batch of easy to make vegetable soup, a pair of socks, bottles of laundry detergent and shampoo as well as a tube of toothpaste, a toothbrush and a few other goodies. The hats and mittens we collected at Christmas will also be a part of the package.

We need your help. We will be looking for volunteers to do the following:

- * Distribute flyers in the neighborhood on Saturday, January 17
- * Bake cupcakes to give away on the 24th. (We have the cake mix & frosting)
- * Put the bags together on Wed, January 21 at 7:00 p.m.
- * Greet our neighbors Saturday, January 24 from 10 am - noon

The First Baptist Church
239 West Main Street
Norwich, CT 06360
Vol. 24, No. 9

Dated Material

Postage Paid
Non-Profit Org.
Norwich, CT
Permit #26

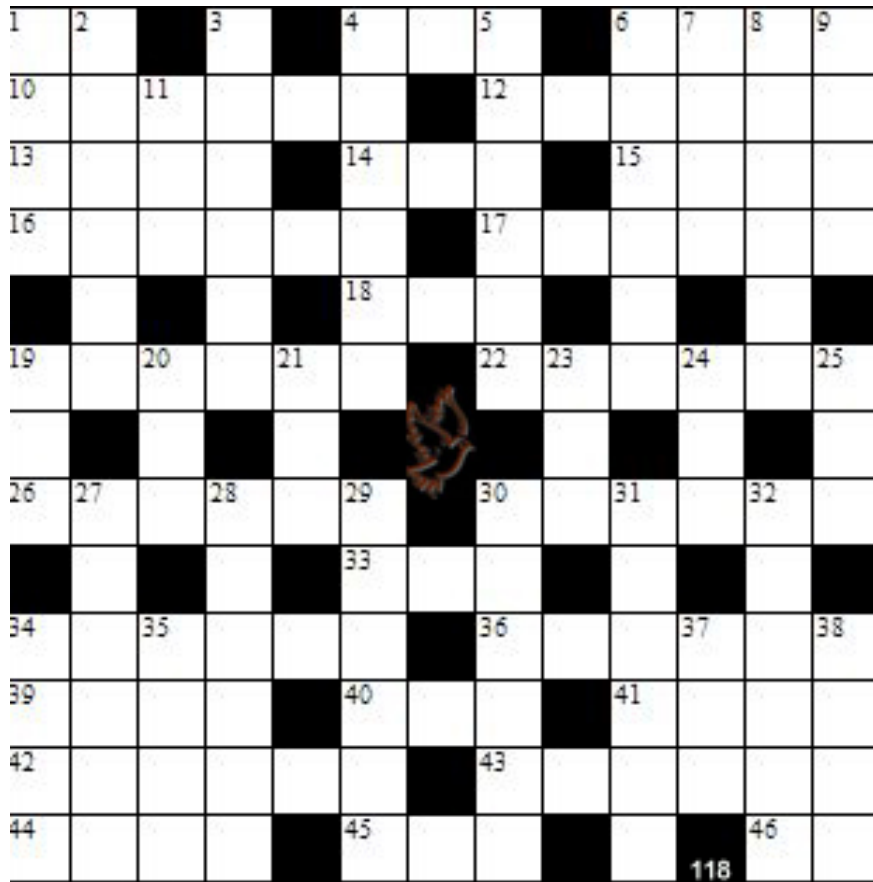
"The Ambassador" is the official newsletter of First Baptist Church, Norwich, Connecticut. It is published & sent monthly to members, friends, and community leaders.

This is the January 2009 Issue
Volume 24 Number 9, 2009
First Baptist Church of Norwich
239 West Main Street, Norwich, CT 06360
Phone: 860-889-0369
web address: www.fbcnorwich.org
e-mail: fbcnorwich@sbcglobal.net

Summer Sunday Morning Worship 9:30 a.m.
Fall Schedule includes: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m.
Worship at 10:30 a.m.

Rev. Dr. Clayton A. Lord, Jr., Pastor
Adele DiBiagio,
Organist & Choir Director
Sandy Stone, Administrative Assistant
Fred Green Sr., Youth Activities Co-ordinator
Harry & Doris Calkins, Carol Calkins, and Bob Walker are the Production Assistants.

Wit, Wisdom & Wackiness



ACROSS

- 1 Lord, ___ it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you (Matt 14:28)
 4 receive him not into your house, neither ___ him God speed (2 John 10) KJV
 6 LORD will go before you, the God of Israel will be your ___ guard (Isa 52:12)
 10 Come near and ___ me; redeem me because of my foes (Ps 69:18)
 12 "It is mine to ___ ; I will repay," says the Lord (Rom 12:19)
 13 Tell them everything I command you; do not ___ a word (Jer 26:2)
 14 Noah had three sons: Shem, ___ and Japheth (Gen 6:10)
 15 the horns of a wild ox. With them he will ___ the nations (Deut 33:17)
 16 how is it that each of us hears them in his own ___ language? (Acts 2:8-9)
 17 whosoever shall exalt himself shall be ___ (Matt 23:12) KJV
 18 all the choice pieces, the ___ and the shoulder (Ezek 24:4)
 19 stayed at home and nursed her son until she had ___ him (1 Sam 1:23)

- 22 the three ___ sons of Jesse went and followed Saul (1 Sam 17:13) KJV
 26 let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing ___ (Amos 5:24)
 30 They are full of envy, murder, ___, deceit and malice (Rom 1:29)
 33 Blessed ___ the merciful, for they will be shown mercy (Matt 5:7)
 34 Saul armed David with his ___, and he put an helmet of brass (1 Sam 17:38) KJV
 36 all the kings of ___ and the governors of the land brought gold (2 Chron 9:14)
 39 The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed ___ seed in his field (Matt 13:24)
 40 They used brick instead of stone, and ___ for mortar (Gen 11:3)
 41 An enemy will overrun the land; he will ___ down your strongholds (Amos 3:11)
 42 No one is fierce ___ to rouse him (Job 41:10)
 43 ___ and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues (Acts 2:11) KJV
 44 The animals take cover; they remain in their ___ (Job 37:8)
 45 He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ___ heap (Ps 113:7)

46 it is proper for us to ___ this to fulfill all righteousness (Matt 3:15)

DOWN

- 1 Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of bronze and ___ (Gen 4:22)
 2 slave nor free, male nor ___, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28)
 3 upright man, who had not consented to their decision and ___ (Luke 23:50-51)
 4 seen you in the sanctuary and ___ your power and your glory (Ps 63:2)
 5 Why aren't you repairing the ___ done to the temple? (2 Kings 12:7)
 6 Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no ___ for the LORD (1 Sam 2:12)
 7 son of Seth (Gen 5:6) KJV
 8 life in Christ Jesus, which ___ with what I teach everywhere (1 Cor 4:17)
 9 a ___ like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure (Rev 11:1)
 11 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees ___ in Moses' seat (Matt 23:2)
 19 As Jesus ___ sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came (Matt 24:3)
 20 Look at the birds of the ___ ; they do not sow or reap (Matt 6:26)
 21 the 8th letter of the Greek alphabet
 23 was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning ___ up the world (Ps 77:18)
 24 son of Benjamin (Gen 46:21)
 25 For I have not come to call ___ righteous, but sinners (Matt 9:13)
 27 They fell down on their faces before the ___ and worshiped God (Rev 7:11-12)
 28 spoke about the ___ of the Israelites from Egypt (Heb 11:22)
 29 But ___ was distracted by all the preparations (Luke 10:40)
 30 "I the LORD ___ the heart and examine the mind (Jer 17:10)
 31 Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year ___ a hundredfold (Gen 26:12)
 32 They refused to listen and ___ to remember the miracles (Neh 9:17)
 34 Rise in the presence of the ___, show respect for the elderly (Lev 19:32)
 35 The ___ marks off the seasons, and the sun knows when (Ps 104:19)
 37 "Yes, Lord," she said, " ___ even the dogs eat the crumbs (Matt 15:27)
 38 Forgive us our debts, as we ___ have forgiven our debtors (Matt 6:12)