

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



January 2005

O, Holy Night..."

The Annual Christmas Party & Pageant went off without a hitch this year as the shepherds, angels and wise men came to pay tribute to the newborn Christ child.

Mary Brockway directed the play. Lori Lord and the teachers helped outfit and coordinate the children. 110 people were on hand to watch as the children told the story of Jesus' birth in dramatic fashion.

Josephine Hall played the part of Mary and Victor Hall took on the role of Joseph. Sarah Lord and Brian Goldin did the narration. Rachel Lord sang a solo. Charmaine Velez played the role of King Herod and Jeremiah Lee served as the Innkeeper. Jennifer Dart was the angel Gabriel this year. All of the other children took roles as



The children always do an excellent job telling the story of Jesus' birth.

angels, shepherds and farmyard animals.

Cynthia Strouse was the pianist for the program and she accompanied Sarah Lord on a solo as well. The Rezendes family provided the baby Jesus for the nativity, as they have for the last ten years.

Worship

Come and worship!

January 2, 2005

New Year's Sunday

Scripture: Leviticus 14:
Sermon: "Do You Have Problems?"



January 9, 2005

Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21

Sermon: "Looking Up At The New Year"

January 16, 2005

Youth & Family Sunday

Scripture: I Corinthians 4:1-21

Sermon: "Uncovering The Source of Your Strength"

January 23, 2005

Recognition of Adele DiBiagio Cofer's 25th Anniversary

Scripture: II Timothy 2:15

Sermon: "It Wasn't Just Another Ordinary Delivery"

January 30, 2005

Friendship Sunday

Scripture: Psalm 51:1-10

Sermon: "Do You Need A Heart Transplant?"

*To enjoy the full
flavor of life, always
TAKE BIG BITES.*



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



Adele's Celebration will Highlight our January Worship Schedule

Adele DiBiagio Cofer came on board as our organist in January of 1980. She was hired as a stopgap, a temporary fix for a troubled music ministry. Rev. Douglas Howell, who was quite a musician himself, stepped up and began directing the choir and Adele simply followed his lead.

Adele had great qualifications and wonderful recommendations. We were glad to have her and her trial became permanent somewhere along the way.

Twenty five years have passed and Adele is very much the heart and soul of our music ministry. Our choir has performed at events in Hartford, and across the state over the years. They have performed cantatas and shared hundreds of anthems with us. Adele gets every ounce of talent out of the group and we have all been blessed by her ministry.

We hope you will join us as we celebrate her ministry on January 23.

Come join us on
Wednesday nights
at 7:00 p.m.
for contemporary music
and a challenging message

Santa Came To Town



Santa holds Conner Fishkin.



Santa enjoys a moment with Joshua LaFlamme.



Santa has a lap full of twins with Cody & Michael Jones.



Santa gets a smile out of Reuben Hall.

Our Ministry...

Jaclyn Vanase Delivers Exceptional Message As Our Student Speaker

College life has been a learning experience for Jaclyn Vanase. She shared some of her experiences with us on December 26 as she delivered the sermon on Student Recognition Sunday. Then with poise and enthusiasm she shared how the Gospel can change a person's life.



Jaclyn has been involved with a student ministry at UCONN called "Young Life" and she is working with teens at E. O. Smith High School. She also has found a group of Christians to worship with that meet on Sunday nights.

Several others participated in the service as well. Tim Rezendes offered the Pastoral prayer. Becky Lord delivered the Children's moment. Emily McFalls read the Scripture. Kristina Howe led the Call to worship and invocational prayer. Sarah Lord called for the offering and gave the offertory prayer. April Rezendes led the Responsive reading. Chris Adams gave the benediction. Jon Vanase led the singing and Nic Muyres, Keesen Howe, Rachel Lord and Margaret McFalls took up the offering.

Past Youth Sunday preachers have included Kate Strouse Canada (1994), Brian Goldin (1995), Amy Brockway (1996), Curtis Royce (1997), Timothy Rezendes (1998), Joanne Clubine (1999), Amanda Guillemette (2000), April Rezendes (2001), Rebecca Lord (2002) and Casey Rezendes (2003).

Deacons Pantry Supplies Six Christmas Baskets and Then Some

Due to a very generous \$250 gift, we were able to give out six Christmas Baskets this year. The baskets included turkeys, donated by Penny and Randy Sargent, the fixings for a Christmas dinner and enough groceries for a few more days.



The Pantry also served four other families right after the holidays. We received a number of canned goods from the Christian Missionary Alliance Youth Group that also helped stock our pantry.

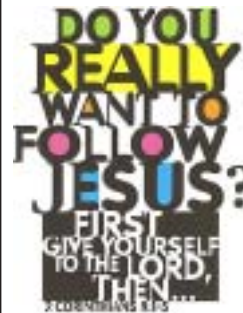
Your donations of food is always welcome. We regularly put out a call for donations on the second Sunday of each month.

Contemporary Christian Music Fills The Last Sunday of Month

On the last Sunday of December our Praise Team played only one song, but they have become a part of our worship experience on the last Sunday of each month. Fred and Gwyn Green, Steve Contois, Patrick Myrthil and Cheryl Dutrumble make up the group at present. Plan to be with us on January 30 as they partner with our choir to lead us in singing again.



Fall Stewardship Campaign Draws To A Close And Budget Committee Plans To Meet Next Week



The Budget Committee will be meeting in the next week or so to make plans for 2005. They will look at the figures from the pledge cards that came in as a result of our Stewardship Campaign and make some decisions. They proposed a pretty ambitious budget for 2005 and now they will use the actual pledges to prepare the budget that will be voted on at the Annual Meeting on January 27.

Thanks goes to all who made a pledge for 2005. If you intended do so, please get it to the church by next Monday, January 13 so it can be counted.

You make our ministry possible through your generous hearts.

Levels of Giving

Someone recently asked how much they should be giving to the church. That is truly a matter between an individual and God. For information sake, here is a breakdown of our giving as the fall campaign was nearing its close.

Giving between \$1 - \$20 a week	22 families
Giving between \$21 - \$40 a week	15 families
Giving between \$41 - \$60 a week	2 families
Giving between \$61 - \$100 a week	1 family
Giving more than \$100 a week	6 families

Ministry to Families

Happy New Year...



William Kirk Ambruso was born on December 26. Bonnie and Mark (pictured to the left with little William) were all smiles when I visited them in the hospital... Carolyn and James Brown and the family spent Christmas in Orlando. The family enjoyed a well earned vacation....Sandy Callendar spent the month of December in Laos and the far East visiting her daughter, Tova. Sandy came back with a deep sense of awe and reverence for how other people live. She also has pictures

from an Island that was swept away by the Tsunami three days after she left... Harry Eisan was in a production of Handel's *Messiah* last month. He loves being a part of that great chorus... Matthew and Elizabeth Isenburg enjoyed an expedition through Mexico last month. I am trying to convince him to do a slide presentation at church later this spring... Deb and Joe Sandherr were back in town for a visit at Christmas time. It was nice to see them...

We Want You In Our Book!

We are putting together a Church family photo directory and we want every family's picture in it. You are an important part of our ministry and we want you to be a part of it.

Come have your picture taken at church. We have two more sittings:

Friday, February 4 from 3:00 - 9:30 p.m.

Saturday, February 5 from 10:00 - 5:00 p.m.

There is no cost to participate!

This directory will help all members of our church put names and faces together so that we can get to know each other a little better. It will also be a nice tool that we can give new members to show who we are and what we do. There will be several pages of photographs that depict our ministry and give people seeking a new church a glimpse into life at FBC. The book will also include an up to date address and phone list of all of our members.

In addition, your participation will mean that the church will also get 1,000 free full color brochures to use as part of our outreach efforts and a beautiful wall color wall composite of all the participating families that will be hung in the parlor.

There is no obligation to buy any photographs. The church does not benefit from any purchases you make. Simply come and have your picture taken, view the proofs and go home. If you want to buy pictures, go ahead. So call for your appointment today. Someone will be in the office (889-0369) Monday through Thursday mornings from 9:00 - Noon.



Gwyn Green and April Rezendes go over the scheduled appointments at our first sitting last week.



We lift up Erwin Diehl in our prayers. He is at Yale New Haven Hospital following emergency surgery over the weekend. He is in critical care. Think of Geri and Kenny as well as they stand by him... We lift up Les Main as he begins his course of chemo therapy. We lift up Grace Latham as she continues her chemo therapy treatments... We lift up Bob Buchowiecki who will have to have surgery to remove cancer from his colon... We lift up George Strouse who has pneumonia and is failing... Doris Regets had a fall and broke her arm and shoulder. She is doing rehab at the Norwichtown Convelescent Home... Pam Fraser had surgery. Think of her while she recuperates.... Doris Royce had a fall but she is hanging in there and appreciates our prayers... Edith Robinson is adjusting to her new home in Maine with her daughter, Courtney. She misses her friends back here and sends her regards.. We think of Ken Taylor as he tries to regain his strength... Nicole Maxim had pneumonia and the rest of her family was battling cold and flu. Think of the whole family... Kristina Howe had surgery on her knee and everything went well... Patrick Myrthil has been looking for a job. Pray he finds one where he will be able to use his gifts...

We think of our young men and women in the military; especially Chad Lord, Tim and Aaron Rogers, Heather Stone, John Stone, Derek Voebel and June Coleman's grandson...

We also lift up our President and pray that God will give him the wisdom to lead and a vision for peace. We lift up Congress and all elected officials and pray that they will work for the common good...

Youth Ministry

Basketball in January & February



All games are at Teachers Middle School unless noted otherwise:

Friday Jan 7 - C Team @ 6 pm
Friday Jan 7 - B Team @ 7 pm
Friday Jan 14 - C Team @ 6 pm
Friday Jan 14 - B Team @ 7 pm
Friday Jan 21 - C Team @ 6 pm
Friday Jan 21 - B Team @ 7 pm
Friday Jan 28 - C Team @ 6 pm
Friday Jan 28 - B Team @ 7 pm
Friday Feb 4 - C Team @ 6 pm
Friday Feb 4 - B Team @ 7 pm
Friday Feb 11 - C Team @ 6 pm
Friday Feb 11 - B Team @ 7 pm

Our Youth Basketball ministry is back in action with a full schedule of games in January and early February. James Brown, Fred Green, John Lopriest and Dave Mehlinger are working with the kids and they have enjoyed some success early on.

Come on down to Teachers Middle School and watch the kids play. You will recognize some of them from our Sunday School and others have played in previous years. The kids are all just super and your

presence in the stands will certainly inspire them. We have two teams this year and we will celebrate with them in a special worship service in late February.

New Nursery List Is Available

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

January 2 - Joanne Clubine, Fran Rogers
January 9 - Sandy Mehlinger, Nancy Schuster

January 16 - Emily Dutra, Zelda Earle
January 23 - Brian Goldin, Jacque Jones
January 30 - Penny Sargent, Jeannine Pestey
February 6 - Sharon Fishkin, Sandra Stone
February 13 - Heidi Adams, Barbara Bray
February 20 - Joanne Clubine, Jennifer Marcy
February 27 - Sandy Mehlinger, Nancy Schuster



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 Jacque Jones and she will accommodate your desire to help.

Youth Group Plans January Outings

On Sunday, January 16 the Primary (grades 3-5) and Junior (grades 6-8) Youth Groups will gather at 1:45 p.m.

to go ice skating at the Norwich Ice Arena. We will meet at the church and ride over together unless other arrangements are made with Kay (535-1395.) The cost is \$4.00 per person to use the rink and there is an extra charge (\$3.00) if you need to rent ice skates. Parents are welcome to come along (we especially appreciate parents of the younger children coming to help supervise.)



On Friday, January 30 the Primary and Junior Youth Groups will meet at the church at 5:30 p.m. and then head over to Teachers Middle School to see our Church Basketball teams play a double header. Ice Cream Sundaes will follow the games. Some of the youth playing basketball include Bethany Stone, Jeremiah Lee, Victor and Josephine Hall, members of our youth groups.



Snow Tubing Planned for February Break



Save the date of Monday, February 21 for a trip to Powder Ridge in Middlefield, Connecticut and a great afternoon of Snow Tubing. The cost is \$20.00 per person (scholarship help is available for the asking) for three hours of tubing. This event is for Junior (grades 6-8) and Senior High (grades 9-12) members and their friends. Please sign up at church or make your reservations by calling 889-0369 by February 14th so we can make sure we have enough drivers.

Primary Youth Group members and their friends can come if they bring a parent along, (Parents do not have to go tubing!) All riders must be 44 inches tall to participate.



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,

Upcoming Events

Annual Meeting Scheduled For January 27

The 205th Annual Meeting of the First Baptist Church will be held on Thursday, January 27 at 6:30 p.m. We will hear reports, vote on the 2005 budget and hold the election of officers. We will also vote on some proposed by-laws changes and hear an update on the Pastor's sabbatical plans for this summer. Reports are due in the office by January 17th



Looking for God?

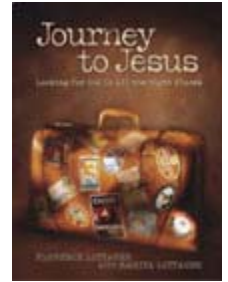
Do you yearn for a closer walk with the Lord? Are you hungry for a fresh encounter with the Savior? Have you been looking for God - and had trouble finding Him? Then maybe you've been looking in all the wrong places.

The *Journey to Jesus* Bible Study will be offered on Monday nights this winter. The study will lead you back in time to the ancient lands of the Scriptures and uncover important truths for our world today.

As you travel through the books of Genesis and Exodus, you'll meet characters such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, and as you walk in their shoes and unearth truths from their lives, you'll understand how to look for God in all the right places. But most important, as you learn how the Old Testament points to its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, you will discover God's ultimate plan of redemption for mankind and how it can change your life today.

Record your personal experiences in your *Trip Journal*. Prepare for the journey of a lifetime - a *Journey to Jesus* you will never forget, a journey that will lead you to a personal encounter with the living Christ.

The Bible Study will begin on January 24 at 7:00 p.m.



Strouse Family to Host Annual Super Bowl Party

On February 6 we will enjoy a double dip as we watch the Super Super Bowl and its award winning commercials at the home of Dick & Cynthia Strouse. We will also enjoy an open house at their new home at 78 Weber Farm Road in Norwich.

For those who are not into football, this party offers food, fellowship, and a chance to put together some pretty challenging puzzles. It is definitely not all about football. Please call Cynthia Strouse (886-0025) to find out what you can bring to share.

Carpentry Work Party

We are looking for a few good men or women to take on a couple of carpentry projects at Church on Saturday, February 5. We will be reframing and covering the basement windows with plywood and repairing a few of the planks on the front steps (weather permitting.) We need a Circular Saw (preferably 2, in case we have more than 3 people show up), a tape measure, a square, a ruler, a mallet or a hammer and a piece of scrap 2x4. If we get 5 helpers and 2 saws, we could have the whole thing done in 2 hours, and nobody would have to work very hard. Coffee and donuts will be provided. Call Brian Goldin (887-6680) or the Pastor (889-0369) with questions.



Pastor Lord To Discuss the Ins and Outs Of Church Membership on January 30

We want everyone who attends our worship services to become a member of the church. On Sunday, January 30 at 9:15 a.m., the Pastor will host a class that will answer all your questions about baptism, church membership, and expectations for members. He will also answer questions about our relationship with the American Baptist Churches USA and touch on the basic beliefs we hold as a Christian Church.

This class will meet in the sanctuary and is open to members of the church who still have questions too. A second class will be offered at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 3 for those who cannot make it on the 30th.

Why not make 2005 the year you officially "join" our church family and become a member of the First Baptist Church?



Counters Will Discuss Their Ministry

The Church Counters will meet after Church on Sunday, January 16 to evaluate and discuss their work and to develop strategies to improve the process as they look forward to the new year. Counters are asked to bring their questions and suggestions to the meeting.

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..

"I have held many things in my hands, and have lost them all, but whatever I have placed in God's hands, I still possess." -Martin Luther

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.



Come help 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.

We need people who could shovel the sidewalk at church after it snows. Please speak to Brian Goldin if you can help.

We are looking for someone who can put in a few hours a week to help Don Walberg do some custodial work at the church.

In Mission

Lessons from Iraq

by Susan Caswell

“Welcome home,” the banner read. Tears filled my eyes. I was home and I was safe. The war for me was over for now. I had been selected for school and war-or-nowar, the school must go on, the Army decided. With reluctance I had left my unit in Iraq and was home.

“Did combat change you?” My daughter asked as she picked me up at the airport.

“Oh no,” I reassured her. “I’m still the same person.” The tension that had built up in her face over the past three months left . . . and she smiled.

I was home and I was safe, but the war wouldn’t be over for me for six more months. Images of the war replayed themselves in my mind’s eye constantly.

Nightmares woke me up every night. Loud noises startled me and had me searching for my gas mask. I was exhausted from lack of sleep and had no energy. Every morning I hauled myself to physical training and then on to class, but as soon as I got home in the evening, I fell asleep in my dinner.

The ghosts of the war had their grip on me. From my training I knew that I had to talk about my experiences. I had to tell my war stories to integrate my combat experiences into my life story. Additionally, I believed that God would use what I had experienced to help others. And, maybe, just maybe, in the telling, the ghosts would be exorcised.

My first attempts to tell my story were thwarted. My experiences were discounted and invalidated so many times that my trauma increased rather

than decreased. These are the types of responses that I heard:

I had it much worse than you did.

But you didn’t take any direct fire, did you?

You know none of those scuds had any gas in them. You should have seen what I saw.

Was your convoy hit? Mine was.

They never did find any weapons of mass destruction.

I was tempted to give up but I realized that if I was having this much trouble telling my story, others may be as well. I decided to conduct an informal survey. I learned that most of the veterans I talked to were invalidated when they tried to tell their story. Many shut down after only one attempt. Their experiences became their private nightmares.

I remained convinced that the only way my ghosts would leave would be for me to learn something that would help me in my ministry and maybe even pass on to others. I continued to experiment with telling my story, noting what worked and didn’t work.

These are the lessons I learned:

If you are a veteran:

- Be intentional about who you tell your story to.
- Keep trying to tell your story. Pay attention to “how” to tell your story; there may be some ways that are easier for you to share and easier for the listener to receive.



If you are listening:

- It may help to first ask the veteran how the experiences have affected him or her. What has changed? Physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. The story may be too intimate to tell right away.
- Know that when someone tells a war story, they are telling you something very intimate and very personal. It can be a beautiful, shiny jewel or it can be like taking a bandage off an open festering wound; or it can be anything in between.
- Even if you listen to hundreds of war stories, none are the same. There may be similarities, there may even be trends, but none will be the same. Let go of your clichés and preconceived notions.

Similarly, even if you are a veteran yourself:

- Be careful about drawing parallels to what you know and have experienced.
- It has helped me to use different media to tell my story: poetry, pictures, oral and written. (Once I even used Play-Doh to reenact an event.)

My plan worked. As I told my story and learned from my experiences, eventually the frozen pictures in my mind started moving. This was disturbing at first, but gradually the memories became less traumatic. They became like the memories of other important life events.

Now when people ask me, “Did combat change you?” I respond, “I certainly hope so.”

Chaplain (Captain) Susan D. Caswell, an American Baptist chaplain, was deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom Feb. 28 to May 4, 2003, and wrote the following based on her experiences working at a combat support hospital. Caswell presently is assigned to the 86th Combat Support Hospital, Fort Campbell, Ky., which is scheduled to leave in December for a year’s deployment in Iraq.

The Good Life

Yoga

Drop-ins welcome!
Join us
Monday nights at FBC
7 - 8:30

Phone Sandy
@ 860-608-4349



Recipe of the Month:

from the FBC Family Cookbook

Emily Wilcox's Baked Beans

2 C. dry beans	1 t. salt
1/2 C. light or dark brown sugar	1 T. chopped or sliced onion
1/4 C. molasses	1 - 2 inch square salt pork
1 T. dry mustard	boiling water

Soak beans overnight. Rinse and put into a kettle of cold water. Bring to a boil and simmer until soft enough for the skin to be removed from the beans when you blow on them. This will take about 20 minutes. During the last 10 minutes, add a teaspoon of baking powder. Rinse the beans and drain. Place in a bean pot or casserole. Place the salt pork on top and sprinkle the rest of the ingredients over mixture. Cover with boiling water. You may bake at a lower temperature for a longer time. Be sure they don't dry out - check frequently towards the end. Cook at 300 degrees for 3 hours.

Book of the Month *Review*

THE GOD YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

by Bill Hybels

Are you looking for God? That is, the God who can really make a difference in your life? Have you already found God... but are disappointed? Then You want to read this book!

Bill Hybels wants to introduce you to the God you're looking for. Not only does this God exist, He passionately yearns to be in a relationship with you. In fact, writes Hybels, "God is head over heels in love with you!"

But in order to find God, you'll first need to put aside the caricatures, the fears, the lies, and the misconceptions that have been gathered over the centuries about who God really is. Understanding the true personality and nature of God can make ordinary people extraordinary and weak people strong.

With penetrating insights and pointed anecdotes, Hybels reveals God for who He really is: a God who knows your every thought, who is always gracious, who always guides you, is always committed to you, and who is always there. A God who feels your joy and sadness, a God who doesn't stop giving, a God who has your life in His loving hands.



(Come to the Church Office to borrow this compelling and helpful book.)

A Powerful Witness...

My Fantastic Final Journey

My doctor told me I wouldn't live to see another Christmas, but I refuse to die quietly.

By Barbara Baumgardner

In early 2004, all my winter plans seemed to revolve around the results of my CT Scan. I sent in a \$100 deposit on an rv parking space in Casa Grande, Arizona, asking my landlord to hold my check until I got the results. The retreat speaking I'd been asked to do also would depend upon the test results. Though I had been declared "cancer free" only two months earlier, I couldn't seem to get excited about planning a "snow bird" trip until after the January 5th procedure. I knew I was at the crossroads of my life—or my death.

One night I dreamed I saw the form of a man draped in white, standing at the junction of a dirt road. The road split, forming a Y, and I wasn't concerned about which way I would go. I believed the form was Jesus waiting to walk with me no matter which path I chose. In the days following that dream, I recalled that picture in my mind again and again. I was certain that I would know which way to go when the doctor's call came the day after the CT Scan.

"It doesn't look good, Barbara," said Dr. Higgins gently. "The cancer is in the liver in several places. You may not have very long."

I began asking questions while my friend, Jan, started to cry. We were having lunch out when the call came on my cell phone. Together, we went to



the doctor's office to pick up a copy of the lab report. Dr. Higgins was at the front desk and he wrapped his arms around me while saying he wished it could have been different. He then showed me a picture of the tumors on the computer screen and advised, "Cancel your motor-home trip, get your affairs in order, and go out to lunch a lot with the girls." The time frame, he guessed, would be a few months, and it wasn't likely that I would see next Christmas.

I had known this was a possibility, because my type of cancer, angiosarcoma, is rare, very aggressive, and almost always metastasizes. But the doctors seemed sure it was encased in my spleen when they removed it in October 2003.

Now, less than three months later, I was facing a different kind of journey than the motor-home adventure I had planned. I was "going home."

Hello, I must be going
How could I tell my family? Widowed 23 years ago, I was the only living parent my three grown daughters had. I was a healthy, active 72-year-old who walks, rides her bike, and drives a 30-foot motor home all across the country. Who will believe this?

I called my oldest daughter, Vikki, first. A long, painful sigh was all I heard on the other end. Then I told her all the facts. After a pause, she said, "Just think, Mom, now you can eat all the chocolate you want."

I loved it! Vikki isn't one to show emotions, and her sense of humor covered the words she didn't have to say. Her sisters, Brenda and Jeri, were next.

I knew it would be the people who cry that would be most difficult for me, yet I knew they needed to hear it from me, not someone else. It was easier for those I could tell in person, because I could hug, hold, and reassure them that I was at peace with dying. "I'm one of the lucky ones," I'd tell them. "I have time to say 'I'm sorry' for mistakes made, time to tell my three daughters what special women they are, time to still make some great memories." And, yes, time to go out to lunch with the girls.

My dreams to be a published writer and to travel both abroad and in the United States have come true. I've got some of the greatest friends in the world. My church is like a big, wonderful family. I now think of life like being on a great vacation. Even the best vacation must come to an end—and hopefully while we are still having a good time. We may feel sad for a

A Powerful Witness

moment, but isn't it always good to come home?

Funny, I don't feel sad about going home. I do pray for strength for the journey. As I get closer to grasping God's welcoming hand, I've learned some things that I hope will equip all of us for our final journey home, whether it's in six months or 60 years.

1. Accept your diagnosis. Yes, get a second opinion. But when the doctors tell you to get your affairs in order, do it. If God chooses to heal you, He will; however, not taking care of practical matters in the meantime is not wise. This is not a lack of faith; it's common sense. My friend George was so deep into denial when his wife was ill that he wouldn't even consider the possibility that God might not heal her. It was only three days before her death that he realized she wouldn't make it. Unable then to do anything but cry, he had no idea how to go on without his beloved Kaye. They had not said their goodbyes and he had made no arrangements for her death or preparations for living on his own.

2. Talk about it. At first, people will be uncomfortable around you. Their loss of words can be compensated for by what you say to them. Tell them about your x-rays or blood tests. Ask them to pray for you and with you. In time, they will become as much at ease with talking about your situation as you are. Humor goes a long way, too. Just think, this is the last year I have to make out my income taxes," I've told friends. People will respond to you in a tone similar to the one you set. My friends saw that my joy was not diminished by my diagnosis.

3. Make memories. When your affairs are in order, don't just sit down and wait. Have lunch out with friends. Go on a trip with your spouse. Have family times of reliving the past while

looking at pictures and talking about favorite things. Two months after my diagnosis, I took a five-week trip in my motor home to Arizona and California and Washington to see family and friends and say "goodbye for now."

4. Write it down. This is a wonderful way to pass on your values and love, and to tell stories that no one else could. I wrote letters to each of my three daughters telling them about some of my favorite memories with them. I told them how proud I was of them and encouraged them to meet me at the river that flows by the throne of God. I wrote similar letters to my sisters and brother and also a letter of appreciation to my church that I hope

None of us is promised tomorrow, which makes me wonder if maybe we all shouldn't be living as if we're on our final journey home.

will be read at my memorial service. I felt a deep sense of relief that I hadn't left anything unsaid.

5. Clean up the clutter. My family breathed a deep sigh of relief as they told me they wouldn't have known what to do with the stuff in my file cabinets. I gave away favorite mementos, shredded old tax returns and financial records, and cleaned out my cluttered drawers.

6. Give gifts now. I found so much happiness in giving meaningful gifts to people while I still felt good. My friend Madelle had borrowed my crystal starburst brooch last Christmas, so I knew she liked it. What fun I had giving it to her. Judy picked out four birdhouses from those that line my

kitchen shelf above the cupboards. I walked my daughters through my home asking them to tell me the special items they would like to have. I put adhesive labels on those things with their names on them. This helped me not to give away something they had wanted, and hopefully it will help diminish conflicts after I die. The more I gave away, the greater my joy.

7. Examine your faith. Though listed last, this is the most important thing a dying person can do. Review your relationship with God. Have you accepted His Son, Jesus, as your Lord, believing that His death on the cross has paid the price for your sins and that you will go to heaven when you die? Not being able to answer yes to this question means there can be no peace in dying.

I've been a hospice volunteer for many years, and I've found that those who have a solid faith die so much more peacefully than those who don't. At hospice, we call it a "good death." Reading the Bible is much more personal to me now, and I've found a greater freedom in sharing my faith. None of us is promised tomorrow, which makes me wonder if maybe we all shouldn't be living as if we're on our final journey home.

One of my daughters e-mailed me a quote from an unknown author. It has become my slogan on this fantastic final journey: "Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming, 'Wow! What a ride!'" What a ride, indeed.

Santa Makes His Annual Visit

Santa Claus made his annual visit to our church bringing little gifts for all the children and taking away a whole lot of gifts for the TVCCA Homeless Shelter. The kids enjoyed their moment with "Mr. Claus" and everyone had an opportunity to get plenty of photographs.

The Party included a birthday cake for Jesus and punch and cookies for all. Pastor Lord read the poem "A Visit From St. Nicholas" and George Rezendes led a carol sing.

Many thanks goes to all the kids and parents who brought in some wonderful gifts to share with those in need. The Shelter was very pleased to receive all the gifts we delivered.



Several of the children posed for a group picture with Santa before he left.

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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.