



The Messenger

A Monthly Newsletter of First Baptist Church of Rochester

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"CAN ANYTHING GOOD COME OUT OF NAZARETH?"
PHILIP SAID TO HIM, "COME AND SEE." (JOHN 1:46)

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PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

Two Umbrellas

Through the centuries creative Christians have worked out varied ways to pass on the Christian faith. One of these ways can be traced back to the late 300s.

Born in C.E. 392, Simon is the most famous of the stylites, or saints who spent their days seated on high platforms or pillars. On his thirteenth birthday, Simon gave himself over to the service of God in the Syrian desert. When he later sought solitude away from the crowds that pressed around him, he stationed himself on a pillar, which grew taller and taller until it reached the height of sixty feet. It is said that Simon lived between heaven and earth for over forty years, preaching and counseling the crowds from high upon his pillar. Numerous individuals who came to him were converted by his preaching. He died in C.E. 459.

Let me ask you, What does the word *evangelism* mean to you? Does it lead you to picture Billy Graham, or any one of dozens of preachers who appear on television, speaking and asking for donations? Do you see images of pairs of young male Mormon missionaries, making their rounds through town? Or perhaps your neighborhood Jehovah's Witnesses, with copies of *The Watchtower* in hand. Or maybe the saffron-robed Hari Krishnas who pass out flowers in airports. Regardless of the specific associations we may have, I suspect that for many of us *evangelism* is a word fraught with negative connotations, hinting at (we judge) unseemly zeal that demands an on-the-spot faith decision.

If we look at the root of the word, however, we find that it comes from the Greek word *evangelion*, meaning, "the good news of Jesus Christ." That being so, *evangelism* means "the bringing (or preaching) of the Good News."

All well and good. But what (we may ask) does this mean for us, here and now?

Nancy Topolewski answers this question in a sermon titled *Evangelism: Two Umbrellas*. When Nancy was a sophomore in college, about halfway through the year, a woman named Vida came to live in the dorm next door to hers. As

she learned only much later, Vida's first weeks were a real struggle. The sum total of her knowledge of Vida was this: She came from Western Africa and was studying far from home. She knew very little English, either written or spoken. She was at least ten years older than the rest of them. She was one of only a handful of non-Caucasians on campus. She spent a lot of time by herself.

One day Nancy got a note from the Dean of Students: "I need to see you." Such summons usually meant trouble. She had no idea what to expect.

When she got to her office, the Dean explained that Vida needed help. "You live right next to her," she said. "I want you to start taking Vida to some of your activities."

Nancy's initial internal response was, Good grief! How was she supposed to do that, when the poor woman could barely communicate in English? Aloud and with some trepidation, she voiced her misgivings to the Dean.

"Oh, you'll find a way," she chuckled. "I have every confidence in you."

That meeting took place on a Friday afternoon. For a whole day, Nancy fussed and sputtered to her friends. Vida came and went, her very presence in the dorm making Nancy feel ashamed for not speaking to her.

Finally, late Saturday night, she knocked at her door. "Vida," she asked, "Are you a Christian?" When she looked at her quizzically, Nancy pointed to the cross she wore around her neck, under her t-shirt (so as not to be offensive to others). Vida's head began to bob up and down excitedly. "Would you like to go to church?" she asked. Again, Vida nodded. Then, Nancy explained to her – very slowly, as if the plodding cadence would make up for her limited English – how to get to the church she attended.

"The service is at 10:30," she said in parting, congratulating herself on having figured out a way to meet the Dean's assignment.

The next day, Nancy went off to church as usual. She kept looking around for Vida during the service. She wasn't there.

Vida wasn't in her room that afternoon. She came in very late the next few nights, carrying piles of books. Nancy wondered what she'd done wrong.

The following Sunday, she got up earlier than usual. She knocked on Vida's door. "Are you awake, Vida?"

"Yes," came the sleepy reply.

Suddenly, in that instant, everything became clear. "Will you come to church ... with me?" You see, telling her wasn't enough. She had to take her with her.

It was pouring rain as they were about to leave. Vida looked out the window, pointed to the rain, and began to shake her head no. Nancy looked at her beautiful African dress. Then a lightbulb went on in her head. "Are you afraid you'll get wet?" she asked. "I have two umbrellas," she told her. "You'll be just fine."

So, every Sunday for the next two years, Vida walked to church with Nancy. Not until Nancy was in seminary did she realize what had happened. Dr. Bruce Metzler, highly respected professor of New Testament, remarked during a lecture: "Evangelism is one beggar, telling another beggar where to find bread." Nancy could have added, "Evangelism is having two umbrellas, and offering one to someone else."

Nathanael said to (Philip), "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see" (John 1:46).

You and I are called to pass on the faith we have received from someone else, not for the purpose of filling up the church with warm bodies; certainly not to bring in new people to pay our bills; but because every person we meet deserves the invitation: "Come – with me – and see." When we do so, we'll need to have a second umbrella ready, just in case.

The next time someone asks you what the word *evangelism* means to you, you can always say, "It means having two umbrellas, and offering one to someone else."

Blessings,
Cliff Houston
FBCR Interim Pastor

* From *Summon's Christian Miscellany* by Parminder Summon and *Evangelism: Two Umbrellas* by Nancy Topolewski

Body Building: A Sharing Fellowship Potluck Lunch



We will be **Sharing Experiences** at November's **Body Building: A Sharing Fellowship**. Held on November 1, 2015, we will again share a dish (of your choice) at our potluck lunch as we fellowship together over a potluck lunch. Please bring a dish to pass if you are able... if not, do not worry, as we always seem to have more than enough food.

Immediately following worship we will gather in Hubbell Hall for a time of enjoying food and fellowship, learning a little more about each other as we share stories or memories. This "body building" event is meant to build up our relationships, interests, and friendships within the body of Christ.

**Body Building:
A Sharing Fellowship**

No need to sign up, just come if you are able. We will conclude around 12:15 PM.

Last month we had a great time learning, growing, praying, eating, and sharing together around the table. We hope you will join us this month!

Holiday Happenings

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

YOUTH AND CHILDREN LED

There's a Song In the Air!

On Sunday, December 6th, through scripture, history, and song, our youth and children will lead the congregation in a musical program of Christmas Carols.

They will share the nativity story in a very interactive way with the congregation's participation as we sing favorite carols which we all love. The history of some of these carols and the lyricist and/or composers will also be shared. It will be a great way to begin your journey through Advent and get into the spirit of the season as we come together and rejoice the birth of our Savior.

The program will begin at 5:00 PM. Plan to support the youth and children of the church, even if you do not stay for the dinner.

CHRISTMAS DINNER

CHURCH FAMILY EVENT

Following the Christmas Program, at 6:00 PM, we will gather as a family in Hubbell Hall to share in a festive time of fellowship, food, stories, and fun. This is an event for old friends, family, and members to come and join in with new: it is a time to feel the warmth and the spirit of the season with good food and special fun for all ages.

A special mystery guest from far away in the north is sure to make an appearance and give gifts of love. The favorite poem of *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* will be shared by Pastor Cliff as wide-eyes gather around.

The Pensgens will once again provide a delicious meal (menu TBD) and the hall will be transformed into an evening of elegance. **We hope you will share a favorite dessert for our dessert bar.** Seat reservations can be purchased in advance and will be Adults and Teens - \$6, Children 5-11 - \$3, Children under 5 are free. Watch for more details as they are determined.

UNION THANKSGIVING

INTERFAITH WORSHIP



Thanksgiving Worship

141st Annual Union Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

November 26, 2015
11:00 AM

Temple Sinai ✎ 363 Penfield Road ✎ Rochester, NY 14625

THANKSGIVING PIES

IN SUPPORT OF HABITAT HOUSE BUILD

Order your pies by November 15 on the Vitality Table for a future Habitat for Humanity build. First Baptist Church of Rochester, along with 9 other Brighton places of worship, belong to a coalition which funds, supports, and builds a Habitat House every three years. Each holiday season, we sell Kelly's Farm Market Pies from Hilton, NY to raise funds which goes toward this fund-raising effort. The pies freeze nicely and can be served for Thanksgiving or Christmas. Delivery will be made to the church on Tuesday, November 25th for pick-up.



The pies are each \$16.00 and the varieties from which to choose are:

Apple Crumb	Apple Raspberry
Pumpkin	Christmas Crumb
Apple Crisp is available for \$12.00	

Each pie is made from scratch without preservatives with fruit grown on their farm. The pies are deep, ten-inch pies, weighing 4.5 pounds each. This is a great way to save some time over the holidays, serve one of the church's mission focus, and help a neighbor in need. Win, Win, Win!

Place your orders on the clipboard at the Vitality Table or contact the church office at (585) 244-2468. Payment should be made to Sally Dodgson, either by cash or by check made out to her, as she will be retrieving the pies.

Holiday Happenings

COMMUNITY GIVING FOR THE HOLIDAYS

GIVING TREE

FOR CAMERON COMMUNITY MINISTRIES



This year our Giving Tree, located in the Garden Room, will have different decorations. We will set up the tree and string the lights but the decorations will be brought by you... as we are decorating it with your gifts of winter items that children often lose and need throughout our cold winters: hats, mittens, and scarves.

At the Christmas Party for the children, held this year on December 22, Cameron Community Ministries hopes each child leaves with one winter item. Our Cameron Giving Tree will help with this effort. Help us decorate the tree with colorful varieties of boys' and girls' hats, scarves, and mittens.

Wouldn't it be great if each child that CCM serves would be able to receive not one item but one of each! Your donations may make this possible, so please be generous and hang your unwrapped gift right on the tree. We will dedicate these gifts on December 20th during our time of fellowship.

STOCKING STUFFERS

FOR FAIRPORT BAPTIST HOMES

Each Christmas, we ask for small (under \$5) unwrapped items for the residents of our Fairport Baptist Homes. These gifts will go into the Christmas stockings each resident will receive at their "household" Christmas parties.

Suggested gifts are: lotions, knee-high stockings, necklaces, pins, after-shave, stationery, cards, stamps, men's socks, etc. Our Christmas parties start in early December so gifts will be collected until November 29th.

Please place these unwrapped gifts in the box on the Vitality Table in the Garden Room. Many thanks from the residents and the Women's Service Board of the Fairport Baptist Homes Caring Ministries.

CHRISTMAS CANTATA



DECEMBER 13 @ 10AM
DURING WORSHIP

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

FOR THOSE DEALING WITH GRIEF OR LOSS DURING THE HOLIDAYS



Join us on Wednesday Evening, December 9th at 6:00 PM for a special service to help anyone who is dealing with grief or loss during the holidays at our Blue Christmas Service. It will be held in the chapel.

LABYRINTH WALK

A CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER-FILLED WALK

During the first week of Advent, the church will be laying out a pattern of a labyrinth in Hubbell Hall for anyone who wishes to use this form of prayer, meditation, and time of reflection to draw near to God. The labyrinth will be available to use whenever the Hall is not in use, with a full setup available on December 9th as part of the Wednesday Evening study.

Scripture references will be available for those who wish to reflect, either before, during, or after their walk. Special lighting and soft contemplative music will be available beginning at 6:00 PM and ending soon after the conclusion of choir rehearsal. Come walk as you journey toward Bethlehem with other Advent travelers.

Advent Taizé Service

TIME OF REFLECTION AND SERVICE



On December 2 in the Chapel, we will share together in a reflective service of peace, love, and joy with a candlelit journey in Advent. Join us at 6:00 PM for reflection and 6:30 PM for the service.

OUR COMMUNITY

Reaching out to others



The Brighton Food Depot

As we come into the Holiday season, wouldn't it be nice to share our abundance and think of those who do not always know from where their next meal will come?

Thank you for your great donations of 135 Mac 'n Cheese boxes and 77 cans of Fruit so far in the month of October. Your gifts are wonderful.

**For November we are collecting:
Cereal and Boxed Spaghetti**

Remington-Hubbell Circle News



We will be selling Georgia Pecans again this year. They will be available after November 1st. The pecans are great for holiday baking and gift giving. Thank you to all who have placed an order with us already. If you didn't have an opportunity to sign up at the Vitality Table, we will be

selling the rest of our order at the church on Election Day, November 3. Come early as our pecans generally sell fast that day.

All proceeds will go toward our mission giving.

Thanks again for your generosity and support of our important mission projects.

Letter to Key Biennial Planning Committee and ABC USA Leadership

A Biennial Request for 2017

As described by one of this year's keynote speakers, Amy Butler, senior minister of Riverside Church in NYC, our church embarked upon a journey 3 years ago "out of our comfort zones" into "places of fear and unfamiliarity...that most often give birth to things more beautiful than we could ever imagine". Called by God, strengthened by prayer and a long period of discernment, First Baptist Church of Rochester chose to welcome and affirm the LGBTQ community within God's family to our church family. We sought the advice and experience of other American Baptist congregations who have felt a similar call in preparing to accept this challenge given to us by God. The Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists (AWAB) is a valuable resource for congregations such as ours who wish to practice the welcome, the embrace, the healing offered by Jesus to those who are marginalized, broken, and so in need of spiritual support.

The 2015 Biennial is to be commended for representing the great diversity of the American Baptist life – the National Black Caucus, American Baptist Women, the Indian Caucus, the Asian Alliance, the Hispanic community, and building bridges between the Baptist and Muslim worlds. Yet, it is our understanding that the nearly one hundred welcoming and affirming churches such as ours were not recognized and that AWAB was not allowed a place of recognition in the Biennial. We believe that our church and others like us are a vital part of the full scope of American Baptist Home Missions as described by Dr. Aidsands Wright-Riggins, "including evangelism and emancipation, spiritual formation and social justice".

It is our fervent hope that at the Biennial in 2017 the **total diversity** of American Baptist life will be openly acknowledged and will include those American Baptists who welcome and affirm the LGBTQ children of God. One positive step would be the inclusion of AWAB within the exhibit hall at the 2017 Biennial.

We thank you in advance for your prayerful consideration and look forward to having a conversation with you,

First Baptist Church of Rochester, NY
Committee on Welcome and Affirmation

GOINGS ON

OCCURRENCES OF INTEREST

Sunday, November 1

Worship 10:00 AM
Body Building: A Sharing Fellowship
Potluck Lunch and Intergenerational Event

Tuesday, November 3

Remington-Hubbell Circle 11:30 AM

Wednesday, November 4

Brown Bag Fellowship 5:30 PM
Study ~ 6:00 PM *Vanity of Vanities, a study in the book of Ecclesiastes*
Adult Choir 7:15 PM

Sunday, November 8

Worship 10:00 AM
Fellowship 11:00 AM
Forum 11:30 AM - Trillium Health—AIDS awareness and prevention
Youth 11:30 AM—Lesson and Fellowship

Monday, November 9

Trustees 6:30 PM
Welcome & Affirm Team 7:00 PM

Wednesday, November 11

Brown Bag Fellowship 5:30 PM
Study ~ 6:00 PM *Vanity of Vanities, a study in the book of Ecclesiastes*
Adult Choir 7:15 PM

Thursday, November 12

RPC Dinner Fellowship & Vespers 4:00 PM

Sunday, November 15

Worship 10:00 AM
Fellowship 11:00 AM
Forum 11:30 AM - *Joy Bergfalk, Project Empower and Coffee Connection.*
Youth 11:30 AM Time of Fellowship

Monday, November 16

[Library](#) Team 9:30 AM
Council 6:00 PM

Wednesday, November 18

Brown Bag Fellowship 5:30 PM
Study ~ 6:00 PM *Vanity of Vanities, a study in the book of Ecclesiastes*
Adult Choir 7:15 PM

Thursday, November 19

Eldergarten— 12:00 *Living with Poetry: A Recital* by Sally Dodgson

Sunday, November 22

Worship 10:00 AM—Rev. Ken McCarthy
Fellowship 11:00 AM
Forum 11:30 Baptist Principles with Rev. Alan Newton
Youth 11:30 AM—Lesson and Fellowship

Wednesday, November 25

Thanksgiving Eve— no programs

Thursday, November 26

Happy Thanksgiving
141st Union Thanksgiving Interfaith Service
Temple Sinai 11:00 AM

Sunday, November 29

First Sunday of Advent
Worship 10:00 AM
Fellowship 11:00 AM
Forum 11:30 AM *Christmas: Facts, Myths, and Traditions* led by Pastor Cliff
Youth 11:30 AM—Lesson and Fellowship

SCHOLARSHIP CRITERIA

Hathaway Scholarship Application Process

The Hathaway Scholarship was created in 2013 by the family of and in memory of Rev. Robert and Dorothy Hathaway, long time members of First Baptist. It is their wish to support High School and Undergraduate students who wish to pursue further education. The Hathaway Scholarship Guidelines are:

- 1) The scholarship will be available to one high school graduate and one college graduate per year. The total scholarship amount provided to each student is \$250.
- 2) The high school student must be an active member of the church environment who attends church service regularly. If there is a health reason a student cannot regularly attend Church or Youth Group functions, that factor will be taken into consideration.
- 3) An application must be made to the Memorial Funds Committee by May 15th to be shared with the family sponsoring the Memorial Gift. This application should be a minimum of a one-page, typed sheet in letter format explaining the applicant's plans for the future and how the church has contributed to those plans. The preferred submission method is by email. Please send your application to fbcmemorialgifts@gmail.com.

LIVING IN THE WORD

A Reflection



We are all storytellers. Some of us are better than others, yet we all share our experiences. We tell stories of everyday life, of childhood experiences, of life-changing

events, and of sorrows, concerns, and joys. Stories are about making connections, engendering empathy and understanding, decreasing prejudice and stigma, and about creating shared experiences. Our stories also become our shared narratives that solidify our connections with others.

Stories strengthen our bonds together: they bring people together around a common purpose. They are what make us unique when we gather together. They affirm our histories and how important the shared moments together are. They make an everyday occurrence, special. Often these stories ensue with laughter - - or tears.

There are the stories we share with strangers - in line at the store, waiting in an airport, or at a sporting event. Other stories happen when we meet someone new on the first day of school or starting a new job. Then there are the stories we tell when we get to know someone better. The more stories we share, the more intimate we become. We learn what is important or unique to the story teller. When someone has shared a story with us, and we tell them our own, it's an act of sharing, compassion, care, and connection. It is how we can say to them, "I see you and I hear you."

Jesus was a storyteller. He wanted people to know Him, God, love, and compassion through the stories He told. So as we are getting to know one another better, whether at church, school, work, or the DMV, take the time to listen and to share. Make connections - real connections. Be like Christ and share God's love, compassion, and care. Won't you make this world a better place by sharing God's love? Connect.