

First Things

A Newsletter of the First Baptist Church of Trenton

March, 2010

A word from Pastor Liz

This Lent

“Be still and know that I am God” Psalm 46:10 tells us. With the coming of Lent (the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Resurrection [Easter] Sunday) we again receive an invitation to slow down and make time and space in our lives for the forgiving love of Christ to renew our spirits.

Many give up something for Lent. Self sacrifice, confession and repentance prepare us to remember Jesus’ sacrifice and resurrection. Some people fast for part of lent. Many avoid Lent because they want to spare themselves the degradation of feeling guilt and shame, or they modestly acknowledge the season by giving up chocolate or some other food or entertainment. Don’t limit yourself this Lent to merely confessing offenses against a holy God or trying to make some show of remorse by denying ourselves some kind of food or drink for 40 days.

Lent was not meant to be a drab and dreary time of self-examination and sacrifice. It is a time offered to us to regain balance once again within our body, soul and spirit. To do that we need to confess to a God who loves us abundantly, unconditionally, and eternally. We have 40 precious days to be open to a God who created us, knows us, and loves us.

This Lent add a time for stillness. I do not know about your life, but mine is filled with one activity after another with a full and exciting schedule. The thought of being still with God requires a determined act of will. Stillness. What might that be like? For a few moments I will have to slow down and make time for contemplation, reflection, examination, attention, and listening prayer.

Lent can be a time of transformation as we participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Lent is about dying to an old identity and being born anew in an identity centered in Christ. Lent can leave us filled with gratitude for what Jesus did for us. Lent can leave us renewed, eager, enthusiastic and ready to offer ourselves to God and to the world.

March Sermons

Sunday, March 7 The Rev. Estelle David will fill the pulpit as Pastor Liz joins her family for her daughter's wedding. Rev. David is currently the Chaplain at the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility in Clinton, NJ

Sunday, March 14 Luke 13:10-13, Mark 5:25-34, Matthew 15:21-28
"Three Women Meet Jesus"

Sunday, March 21 Luke 15:11-32 "Lost Sons"

Sunday, March 28, Palm Sunday
Luke 19:28-44 "Cheers to Tears"

From the Board of Deacons

"The woman who slouched down on the other side of the subway car distressed me. Her hair was matted, her face dirty, and though it was a cold night outside, she was wearing a flimsy cotton dress and a blanket through which she had torn holes for her arms. As a Christian, I wondered, what should I do? She was so obviously in need. Wasn't there some shelter I could direct her to, some place where she would get all the attention she required? No, I finally reasoned, her problems were too staggering for me.

"As I pondered and rejected possible solutions to the woman's plight, the car came to a stop. A young man poorly dressed but neat, rose to leave. He was out of the car and the train had started up again before I really noticed what he had done. He had slipped off his gloves and laid them on her lap."¹

God has chosen not to meet the needs of the church and the world directly. Instead, God gives gifts to individual persons that are to be used for the benefit of the whole church and the whole world. No one person, has all the necessary gifts which the Body of Christ needs, but all that are necessary for the well being of the church are distributed among the people of God.²

When you see a need, big or small, is it possible that God is nudging you to be part of the solution? During the interim period in any church there are many needs that need to be addressed. Some are big. Some are small. Don't wait to be asked, just pitch in and help. If the problem seems too big for you, do what you can, and ask others to lend a hand.

¹ From Guidepost, October 1977.

² From Search Committee Devotional, American Baptist Personnel Services

From the Search Committee

I know the Search Process seems really long. I want you to know that your Search Committee has been working regularly and steadily. This month and next we will be doing telephone interviews with the ministers who have expressed an interest in being the pastor of our congregation. We will be meeting every week – sometimes twice a week – there are twelve ministers to interview. At this time in the process, and always, we covet your prayers.

Pray that we will be led to the person who can lead our congregation into the future. Pray that we will be open to God's leading. I believe that we are blessed with a fine group of candidates. In fact it may even be hard to choose among so many good men and women of God. They come from many different cultures, and many different experiences.

Once we have completed the phone interviews, we will select a few individuals to interview in person that we believe most closely match the needs of our congregation. We are not at the end of our process but we are moving along. In the meantime, we are fortunate to have a wonderful Interim who is doing a great job of keeping the ship afloat.

The Board of Christian Education

The COAL Training Event met on Feb. 20th and Feb. 27th. There were 10 members and three of our friends from the Burmese Fellowship that attended the day long training. Liz Congdon participated on a panel "Welcoming the Stranger" to discuss Multicultural Ministry. Roy Medley was the plenary speaker at the end of the day.

The Board of Education is continuing to discuss possibilities for a summer program with the Next Gen church.

Sunday School classes have been meeting regularly but attendance has been small. We need your support and participation. Assembly time is at 9:45 and classes begin at 10:00. Our next breakfast will be March 14th with a mission message from Pastor Liz.

Fellowship time following morning worship is enjoyed by everyone. Please help to do your part in this area of our church life. Sign up to bring something to share, help set up the snacks, or, clean up after we all enjoy the time together. A few people faithfully take care of all these things every week. Can you lend a hand?

A Note of Thanks from Tarry Truitt and the *Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness*

Dear Rev. Liz,

Thank you and your church for allowing us to use your church for Project Homeless CONNECT and SUPER Tax Days! It is the perfect size for the events. You have been so helpful and kind.

Peace,

Tarry

Serving This Month
Deacons:
Eileen Kelty and Lyn Wood
Trustee:
Richard Pflieger

Coming up in March and April Be Part of the Action

Join us on **Sunday March 14th** after church as we head for Riverview Estates, the Baptist Home of South Jersey, to conduct the 3:00 pm chapel service. It will also be an opportunity to visit and worship with Miriam Dean.

Join us on **March 20th** from 9:00 to 11:00am as we hold a “Town Hall” meeting with others from the Capital Association to learn about and discuss the proposed ABCNJ Council organizational changes. A key component of this model of ministry is the creation of the Association Covenant Groups (ACG). Association Covenant Groups will be composed of between 12 – 30 churches. The ACG will focus on the common mission and ministry of the participating churches. Each ACG is responsible for the following areas of associational life:

- Sending one representative to the ABCNJ Professional Ministries Committee
- Ordinations
- Accepting new churches into ABC life
- Mission and ministry where it makes sense for local churches to cooperate
- Worship and fellowship with member churches
- The training of local lay leaders

Your participation and input is a vital part of the renewal process. The Rev. Teresa Ely, ABCNJ Council President writes that “The intent behind this restructuring is to increase our ability to remain faithful participants in the mission and ministry of our Lord, Jesus Christ. If the churches provide positive feedback and support, this proposal will be brought to a vote at the 2010 ABCNJ Annual Session on September 24–25, 2010.

SAVE THE DATE

Join us on **Sunday, April 18** for the Capital Association’s Annual Meeting at 4:00 pm at the Chesterfield Baptist Church when First Baptist Church of Trenton’s ministry with Burmese Karen refugees will be the focus of the gathering. Let’s have a great turnout from Trenton!

\$1 Million Requested by Haitian Baptists for Earthquake Recovery

Over \$254,000 in relief funds have been received from American Baptist Churches USA for immediate needs. Immediately funds were allocated for distributing mattresses, tarps and other shelter necessities, providing food for families, establishing a medical clinic and providing basic personal hygiene items. Our missionaries are there working in the rescue effort; Steve and Nancy James, Kristy Engel, Ketly and Vital Pierre, Adalia Schellinger-Gutierrez, and Madeline Flores-Lopez are leading teams of volunteers for help now and planning for longer-term rebuilding in the future.

Our commitment to help in Haiti is a long-term commitment. Of the more than 21 Baptist churches in the convention, 11 church buildings were damaged and at least four were completely destroyed. Two pastors died in the earthquake along with 29 other church members. More than 400 congregants were injured. Among convention congregations, 438 homes were destroyed and 673 were damaged. Join us in reaching out to help now and in the future.

Milestones from Mildred Caperella

I was reading a survey from ECHO, a Senior Citizens group, taking a look at the question "What do you like about ECHO?" Responses included "A friendly group," "Friendly people," "The fellowship and warmth." "Making new friends," "Contact with other members." At ECHO everyone is valued, everyone is loved. Your opinion matters and your involvement is important. After reading the above I said, "How about that." It reminds me of FBC. Take out ECHO and put in FBC. We have the same feeling. ECHO gets better every year and so does FBC.

You are one breath away from being anything you want to be. That one breath is a choice – choose to be great!

A wife said to her husband "When you come in from ice fishing with hat, hair, a frozen mustache, and smelling like fish and stale beer, I fall in love with you all over again."

Some of the supermarkets are selling veggie and flower seeds. Could it be spring is on its way? Not until spring and winter battle it out. My garden looks sad. On one side I have some seashells. They look pale. Come spring they will brighten up.

Driving past the apartment. pool two geese were busy pecking at a patch of grass where the sun had melted the snow. On the other side a flock of geese were sitting on the snow honking "Feed me! Feed me!" The other two geese were busy pecking and eating and saying, "Thank God for little favors."

Charlie and I visited Miriam at the Baptist Home. She sends her love to all. The Baptist home project is "Raising the Roof Project." Riverview Estates is in need of replacing all of the roof surfaces. The cost is estimated at \$150,000. The "Raising of the Roof Project" will run from 2010-2012; \$50,000 a year for three years. You will see the banks around. Drop change or a dollar bill. We would like to have the banks filled by May 31, 2010. Please give what you can. God bless!

Drive with care. Stay warm and healthy!
Have a blessed day!

*With sorrow for ourselves yet with rejoicing for her,
we celebrate the graduation of*

ELVA WILBERT

*from this earthly realm to a more fitting place,
the Heavenly Realm of God
on Monday, February 1, 2010*

Celebration of her life took place on February 4, 2010