

September/October
2014

THE FLARE

Lansdowne Baptist Church's Newsletter

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Changes

Change has been on my mind lately. People generally have trouble with change, even though it is always around us. In the Bible, when God or a messenger from God showed up, people were afraid because they could tell big changes were coming. And yet, change happens.

We have some exciting changes coming this fall. One of the big challenges facing congregations today is being able to speak confidently and freely about our faith and how it applies to the world today. Changes in Christian Education will help meet that challenge. Beginning on Sunday, September 14, the adult class will start with a new approach. New topics of study will be offered every six weeks by a variety of teachers. The first two six week courses will be taught by me. The first course will be on the Bible and how we use it. The second course will be on teaching teachers to teach the classes after that. Anyone interested in teaching six week adult classes should attend, propose a course topic to the deacons, and when approved be ready to teach that course. This will provide us with diversity of material and perspectives from which we can learn much. We will also offer new member classes three times a year as needed for every new member who joins. It will be a wonderful introduction to this church and the American Baptist denomination. Finally, we will be offering a "Bag Lunch Bible Study" Wednesdays from noon until 1 PM each week beginning September 17. Here we will explore the life applications the Bible has for us today.

It is going to be an exciting fall, with plenty of other interesting changes yet to come. God works that way.

~ Pastor Jeff

Suicide Prevention

Dear Friends,

On Monday night, August 11, the first night of our family vacation, we received the terrible news that the talented comedian and actor Robin Williams had died. As the story unfolded, we discovered his death was a suicide following a long struggle with depression. Along with truly wonderful remembrances, there was some horrid disinformation on the nature of suicide and its victims. Awful judgments were passed that were no doubt painful to not only Mr. Williams' family and friends, but to everyone who has ever lost a loved one or friend to suicide. Given the circumstances, I felt compelled to stop and write.

First of all, a famous suicide leads others suffering to consider suicide as a viable option. If you are contemplating suicide yourself, please stop. You are a much loved child of God and this is not the solution you are looking for. Seek help. Reach out to others and allow them to help you. As Ann Voskamp, who survived her own suicide attempt, wrote: "You don't try to kill yourself because death's appealing - but because life's agonizing. We don't want to die. But we can't stand to be devoured." There are professionals who can help with the pain of life and keep you from being devoured. I will be happy to help you find them and to listen to you if you wish to talk. You are not alone in your suffering and you do not need to be alone.

Here is the number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255). As they state on the Lifeline website: "You aren't alone. No matter who you are or what problems you are struggling with, hurting yourself isn't the answer. We want to help you find hope."

All of us Christians are called to follow Jesus. Jesus came for everyone, had compassion for all, and healed the sick, including those suffering from mental illness. Jesus sought to comfort all who are burdened. We are to be like Jesus. We are to have compassion for all who suffer, including those struggling with depression and all other illnesses of the mind. We are to help them to healing, just like Jesus. I have seen recent examples of individuals who took small steps and made a huge difference. In Australia, one man smiles and talks with people exhibiting suicidal tendencies. He invites them home for tea. Often a suicidal impulse is fleeting, if someone is there to delay a suffering soul. More than one person headed for a suicide leap from the Golden Gate Bridge left a note behind stating that if one person smiles at me or speaks to me before I reach the bridge, I won't jump. It can be that easy to change a life. (See Page 3 for a list of warning signs that someone may be considering suicide)

Not everyone caught up in these crises of the mind are able to seek help for themselves. We, as members of the priesthood of all believers, need to be willing to step up and get someone help if the signs are strong. We need to risk looking foolish with stakes this high. As psychiatrist Carl R. Sullivan writes, "It's key to remember that depression is a very treatable disease. Some people have a relatively mild case; some have severe depression that may require a more intense, comprehensive approach. Sufferers need to be encouraged by being reminded that they will not always feel this way." They will not always feel the agony of being devoured to use Ann Voskamp's imagery.

Finally, let us all be careful not to pass moral judgment on those who die from suicide. Suicide is considered to be the terminal phase of the illness that is depression. We would not pass moral judgment on someone who has passed away from other illnesses and we should avoid it here. There is no need to increase the agony of all who suffer from an individual's death by suicide. Further, Luke reminds us in chapter 6, verses 1 and 2: "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get." As for me, I'd prefer we all be judged by God's merciful and gracious standards rather than our own!

Wishing you all God's peace.

~ Pastor Jeff Snyder

Warning Signs of Suicide

Here are signs someone is considering suicide.

- Talking about wanting to die or kill oneself.
- Looking for a way to kill oneself, such as searching online or buying a weapon.
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly.
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
- Displaying extreme mood swings.

If someone you know is exhibiting these signs, please seek help. The number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-TALK(8255).

Act, Review, Revise, and Act

Back in seminary we were taught a particular method for approaching new projects. It begins with determining to act and following through with that action without too much initial preparation. Once the initial action is taken, participants review what happened. Once the review is complete, those who are ready to try again revise what they did before, improving on the previous efforts, and act again, with more polished results. Repeating this process, the performance of the group improves over time and meaningful actions continue to be taken.

I had an opportunity to try this approach out in August. I received an invitation from the Lansdowne Police Department asking all community organizations, including churches, to participate in the National Night Out. This invitation arrived a few days before the event. This seemed like a good time to implement the “Act, Review, Revise, and Act” method. I asked my wife Sherry to help. We pulled together a table, handouts, a display, and lots of coloring and activity pages for kids. The evening was a real success. We made many contacts, handed out a number of church flyers, some leaflets on the Bag Lunch Bible Study course, and many, many coloring pages. We also convinced one person that Lansdowne Baptist Church is not closed! Now, we’ve reviewed what we learned and will be ready to improve our presentation next time.

We hope you’ll want to be involved in this experience next time around. It really is a spiritually uplifting experience getting out there and meeting people from the community we serve.

~ Pastor Jeff

Speaking and Working Against Violence

Dear Friends,

It was horrifying to watch as violent events unfolded in Ferguson, Missouri, following the shooting death of the young, unarmed African American teen, Michael Brown. The events between the time the news broke to the fevered pitch of escalating violence Wednesday have proven yet again how badly we in the church need to cry out against and work toward preventing the growing violence in our society and around the world. We need to work hard to end the necessity of African American families to educate their children on how to interact with a society that so often works against them in entirely unjust ways. Fortunately, there are actions we as a church, and individually, can take.

In June of 2013, the American Baptist Churches USA Mission Summit dealt with this issue. Here is some of what they concluded. You may find the entire article on the ABC-USA website. Some of the insights they had are hard to grapple with, but we need to take them seriously. They observed that we are all both victims and practitioners of violence in the language we use, in how we respond to hot button issues facing the church in many cases, and much more. Paul warned us about how dangerous our own tongues could be. Justice is a precondition of peace. Jesus calls us out into this chaotic world to work for peace and justice. Violence looks very different in different communities and we need to educate ourselves on its many faces. We need to work hard against the growing number of stereotypes thrown at people today and open our hearts to real, hurting humanity. Violence is never about “them over there.” We need to be able to honestly look at ourselves and how violence touches us. Finally, until we are willing to fully trust God as the Bible calls us to trust, we will remain on the sidelines and allow the howling winds and tides of violence to wash over us and our society, silenced by our fears.

However, the news is not all bad. There are many things we can do to start correcting this horrid situation. The Summit created many useful suggestions. Church communities need to repent for our contributions to and complicity in violence (both in language used and ironically language not used). We need to develop a strong attitude of non-acceptance of violence. We need to actively denounce features of our culture promoting and elevating violence. We need to work hard against racism in its many forms and expressions. All the while we need to use the most respectful language as we have seen how little traction is gained by screaming, exhorting, and condemning others. We need to actively work and speak against messages and images promoting violence and stereotyping. Ministers need to preach on domestic violence, child sexual violence and abuse, all to raise awareness among us. This article is one step in that direction. We need to work hard to restore people to justice and full life in our schools, our neighborhoods, and our cultures. Part of this is making sure prisoners released have methods of reintegrating healthfully with society. We need to be able to have safe and healthy conversations about violence both in our churches and our communities. Small, safe group settings work well for these conversations. Finally, we also need to promote and support ministries like the Prison Ministry Task Force.

The situation is far from hopeless. Jesus calls us to love our neighbors and our enemies. The Bible tells us time and again to speak and work for justice and for nonviolence for all people. The tragic events in Ferguson and many other places underscore just how badly and how quickly we need to act.

May the peace of Christ be with us all.

~Pastor Jeff Snyder

Christmas Is Not That Far Away!

Please tell me that summer is not really over and that September is here already! You're kidding.....right? Good heavens! If the next three months go by as quickly as the last three, Christmas REALLY is not that far away! It is definitely not too early for us to begin giving serious thought to our Christmas Fair on Saturday, December 6, 2014. Anyone who knows me knows that I have several passions in life --- my children and grandchildren and cooking/baking. I am so blessed to have the family that I do and God has also blessed me with being a stubborn, Pa. Dutchman who refuses to give up! So I am thrilled and honored to once again be heading up the wonderful, fabulous food and bake table at our annual Christmas Fair. As you have undoubtedly heard me say before, our food/bake table has an amazing reputation because of the variety and how delicious the food and baked goods on our tables are. And that's where YOU come in!

Naturally we are inviting all of our church family and your extended families and friends to be sure to come to the Christmas Fair and support our efforts. But we are also hoping and asking that you support us by becoming involved in some way to make this Fair a success. One of those ways is asking people to contribute food items to our food/bake table. It is only natural that you might ask, "What may I make for the bake table?" There is no right answer to this question. From year to year what customers are looking for and what they want to purchase changes. My rule of thumb when it comes to making suggestions as to what you could make is to tell you to make a recipe that is one of your family's favorites or always goes over well when you make it for family gatherings or for friends. If it's well received by your family and friends, then it more than likely will be a good item to sell at our food table.

There are some "obvious" food items that people make, such as pies of all kinds, cookies, brownies, cupcakes, and breads. Other popular items are homemade jellies and jams, relishes, homemade candies, and other types of specialties. If you love to "read" recipes as much as I do, this is a great time to start looking for ideas as to what you may decide to make. Cakes, in general, do not sell particularly well. But that's one of those unpredictable things! Someone may show up who is looking for an entire cake. We do sell pies by the slice, when requested, and would do the same with whole cakes. After all, the purpose of our Christmas Fair is to sell our items and make some money!

Please think about how you would like to help us with the Christmas Fair. There are so many opportunities--- some involving only an hour of your time and some involving more. The friendships and fellowship that we share is so special and so wonderful. These are the kinds of bonds that make a church strong and the reason that the Christmas Fair has the deep meaning to those of us who have been doing this for so many years. Just as you have traditions in your family that mean so much to you and that you don't want to see disappear, our Christmas Fair is a tradition in our church family and one that we feel strongly that we do not want to lose. Please help to keep this going by offering your help. Ask Jill Hall, Melissa or Will Thompson, Violet Brown, Jill Esterline, or me if you have any questions or if you would like to find out how you may help.

Gather up those food magazines or go online to investigate some wonderful and delicious recipes that you could decide to make for our food/bake table. And we shall do our best to keep you informed about our progressing plans for the Christmas Fair! Stay tuned!

~ Mary Jo Taylor, Head Baker

Christmas Fair - December 6th 10 am - 2 pm

Please mark your calendars for December 6th from 10:00-2:00 for Lansdowne Baptist Church's annual Christmas Fair. December 6th will be here sooner than we realize. In June, the congregation overwhelmingly decided to host the Christmas Fair again this year. The Christmas Fair committee is excited to build upon the traditions we love about the Fair with some new ideas. The Fair has a history of building fellowship within the church. So, we are reaching out to the entire congregation to make this year's Fair great! The committee welcomes any help church members can offer from contributing items for sale to volunteering time. Please see the list below for the current timeline and needs of the Fair.

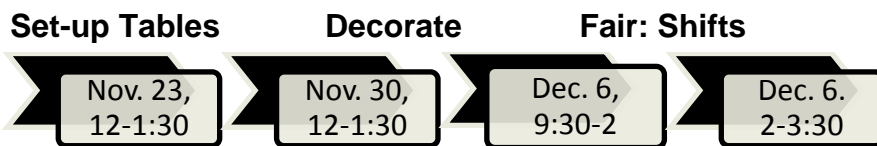
The Christmas Fair is a fun and exciting day to begin the holiday season. It is also a great place to find reasonable price gifts as well as fill-up on lunch and holiday bake goods. **Please mark your calendars and spread the word to your friends and families.**

Donations:

Grandma's Attic: Gently used items, including electronics, movies, housewares, jewelry, knickknacks, etc. (please no clothing or books). Place in the Sunday School room closet or the basement.

One-of-a-Kind (aka Silent Auction): Special/unique items of more value or appeal. Please contact Jill Esterline with any ideas/questions.

Timeline:



Fair Shifts: (9:30-2:00) Assistance is needed in many of the areas. If you are available for any portion of the day, please speak with Jill Hall.

Bag Lunch Bible Study

Beginning on Wednesday, September 17, from noon until 1 PM, the pastor will be offering a Bible study for all who are interested. We will be exploring together the many life application lessons the Bible has to offer careful readers, beginning with the book of Matthew. The intent of the course is to enrich the lives of all who participate and everyone they subsequently meet. Friends and neighbors are entirely welcome. The classes will be held either in the Cooper Room, or—weather permitting—out on the corner of our property under the trees in front of the education wing. Bring your own lunch, a Bible, and your curiosity. Spiritual nourishment will be provided!

September & October Birthdays and Anniversaries

September 2	George Clarke-Pilgrim	October 1	Katie & Lou Ventura
September 10	Josh Weaver, Sr.	October 4	Oliver Andrewson
September 11	Bob & Josephine Flick	October 8	Aaron Andrewson
September 16	Dante Alexis	October 9	Donna Leitch
	Prisca Afantchao	October 13	Carol Peart
September 17	Darleen Andrewson	October 15	Marion McCormick
September 18	Jay Echternach	October 18	Joshua Weaver, Jr.
September 19	Rev. Gustave Afantchao	October 20	Danielle Lites
September 20	Delores Davis	October 22	Bob Flick
September 21	Ann Childs		Althea Jeanty
	Angela J. Jones	October 23	Ruby Andrewson
September 23	Amy & Matt Schoettle	October 24	Jessica Grover
September 28	Matt Schoettle	October 27	Derrick Black
September 30	Noah Andrewson		Grace Echternach
		October 28	Josh Gelin
		October 30	Joanne Leonard

The Philadelphia Baptist Association Mission Banquet



"Everybody needs an Angel!"

Hebrews 13:2

*The PBA Celebrates the Gifts
of Hospitality in our
Midst...and those who
"Welcome the Strangers."*



Saturday, October 18, 2014

12:30 pm

Hilton Philadelphia City Avenue
(4200 City Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19131)

Speaker: The Reverend Don Ng,
President of American Baptist Churches USA

Rev. Don Ng is serving as President of American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) for the biennium running from January 1, 2014-December 31, 2015. Additionally, he served as Vice President for the term running from January 1, 2012-December 31, 2013. Since 1998, Don has served as senior pastor of the historic First Chinese Baptist Church in San Francisco that was started by the American Baptist Home Mission Societies in 1880.



Focus of the Day: Hospitality

This year we are celebrating the work of persons whose gifts bring joy to the life of the congregation, extend hospitality in the neighborhood on behalf of the church and/or extend hospitality expressed by supporting immigration (refugee resettlement).

Nomination Submission Deadline Extended to: August 15, 2014

Please complete the enclosed nomination form and return it to the PBA office by August 15, 2014.

For Additional Information Contact:

Janet Reedy at 215-482-8222 ext. 12 or jhreeedy@philadelphiabaptist.org

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

Lansdownebaptistchurch.
blogspot.com

Cause of the Month

The September Cause of the Month is Samaritan's Purse - Operation Christmas Child (also called the "Shoebox Project"). Last year we were privileged to ship 20 shoeboxes all filled with "treasures" for children in need around the world. By September we should have lists of appropriate gifts. They are divided by ages and genders. You may either fill a shoebox and bring it in or bring in supplies from the list. Many of these children are orphans because of wars and disease. This might be their only present they ever get. The children attend a service by Samaritan's Purse workers who present the Gospel of Jesus Christ and at the end give out the gifts.

The October Cause will be American Baptist World Mission Month. All monies collected will be sent to American Baptist International Ministries. There will be more information coming in October.

~Jean Grover, Missions Chair

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